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# International Study Tours and the Development of Sociocultural Consciousness in K-12 Teachers

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INTERNATIONAL STUDY TOURS AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF  
SOCIOCULTURAL CONSCIOUSNESS  
IN K-12 TEACHERS

A Dissertation Presented

by

RAYMOND YU-KUANG YOUNG

Submitted to the Graduate School of the  
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment  
of the requirement for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

MAY 2010

Teacher Education and Curriculum Studies

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RAYMOND YU-KUANG YOUNG

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## DEDICATION

To my parents, Lung Chang Young and Dolores K. Young,  
who came to America as immigrants and started life anew.  
Only now do I realize what it all meant.

To my children, Owen and Phoebe,  
thank you for keeping me grounded and true  
to what is really important in life.

To my wonderful wife, Sara, whose  
love and support made this dissertation and my life complete.  
I love you more than words can say.

**The World is a book, and those who  
do not travel read only a page.**

St. Augustine

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To my friends and mentors, Dr. James Hafner and Dr. Sally Habana-Hafner, who gave me the opportunity to participate on the study tour and made it an experience I will never forget. Thank you so much for all the kindness and generosity you have shown me throughout the years.

To all the teachers that participated in this research project, thank you for finding the time to meet with me and share your thoughts and reflections despite your busy lives. The lessons we have learned from your experiences are testament to the important work you do.

To my wife and partner in life, Dr. Sara Young, without whose love and support none of this would have been possible. Thank you for your enduring patience and the countless hours you spent (and continue to spend) advising me in matters of academia and life.

## ABSTRACT

### INTERNATIONAL STUDY TOURS AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIOCULTURAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN K-12 TEACHERS

MAY 2010

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This research study examined the long-term effects of a professional development study tour to Southeast Asia that took place in 2001. Participants included ten public school teachers from Western Massachusetts, which has a significant population of people of Vietnamese and Cambodian descent. Funded by a Fulbright-Hays Group Projects Abroad grant, the purpose of the study tour was to increase teacher awareness, knowledge and understanding of contemporary Southeast Asia so that they could more effectively address the educational needs of students representing diverse cultural backgrounds, particularly immigrant and refugee youth, through the development of culturally relevant curricula and lesson plans.

From 2007 to 2009, this researcher conducted a series of phenomenological interviews with nine of the original participants to investigate more deeply how their personal and professional lives were impacted by the study tour experience. The decision to interview using a phenomenological approach was based on the belief that in order to more fully understand how and why individuals constructed meaning(s) from certain



experiences, it was essential to have some contextual knowledge of that person's life, including those formative episodes that helped establish their original worldview.

Analysis of study tour impact areas revealed areas of personal and professional growth particularly as it pertained to the development of sociocultural consciousness, cultural understanding, sensitivity and empathy towards students of diverse cultural backgrounds. Another finding was that the experience of being an "outsider" in another country provided the context for teachers to explore and critically reflect on issues related to their own social and cultural identities. Further analyses revealed that the overall impact of the study tour varied based on the participant's prior intercultural and life experiences. Participants with less experience and practical knowledge of issues of multiculturalism and identity were more likely than their counterparts to come away from the experience with more profound changes to their worldview.

This study is theoretically grounded with research in multicultural education, experiential education, transformative learning, global education and study abroad.

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY**

#### **Background**

This study examined the perceived long-term impacts of a 30-day, professional development study tour for public school teachers that took place in Southeast Asia during the summer of 2001. Funded by a Fulbright Hays Group Projects Abroad grant, the study tour included ten teachers from Western Massachusetts who visited the countries of: Thailand, Vietnam and Cambodia (see Appendix D). Phenomenological interviews were conducted with nine of the original participants, which were then transcribed, coded and analyzed for evidence of change in knowledge, attitude, behavior, and ways of thinking resulting from their experiences. Such changes are significant because they have the potential to constructively address the growing cultural gap between United States public school students and their teachers by providing an avenue through which intercultural understanding and empathy can be improved. Whereas teacher education programs have traditionally addressed culture learning from a cognitive orientation, there is a growing body of research that points to the critical role experience plays in enhancing intercultural development (Cushner, 2007).

Analysis of perceived study tour impact areas revealed areas of personal and professional growth that had not been considered during the pre-assessment phase. The "new" impact areas demonstrated how experiential study tours often have a value-added component that enhanced participant knowledge and understanding beyond what was originally anticipated. Teachers were able to expand the depth and breadth of their

understanding of not only the complexity of certain concepts related to issues of culture and identity, but also how they are manifested in real life situations. Further analysis also provided evidence that the overall impact of the study tour varied based on the participant's prior intercultural and life experiences. Participants with less experience and practical knowledge of issues of multiculturalism and identity were more likely than their counterparts to come away from the experience with more profound changes to their worldview.

Such changes are significant because teachers in culturally diverse schools succeed or fail based on their experiences, knowledge, and disposition rather than what they learn in a pre-service program (Haberman, 1996). Cushner (2007) points out that those who participate in study abroad programs “tend to demonstrate greater levels of cultural sensitivity and racial consciousness, thus making them more effective at addressing issues related to domestic diversity” (p. 30).

### **Statement of Problem**

The racial and cultural composition of k-12 public school students in the United States has shifted significantly over the past thirty years. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) in 1972, 22 percent of elementary and secondary public school children were of racial/ethnic minority backgrounds (Villegas & Lucas, 2007). By 2004, the NCES reported that racial/ethnic minority students accounted for 42 percent of total enrollments in United States public schools (U.S. Department of Education, 2004). By contrast, the teaching force in 2003-04 was 83.1% non-Hispanic White, 7.9% Black, 6.2% Hispanic, and 1.3% Asian/Pacific Islander, and .5% American



Indian/Alaskan Native. Thirty nine percent of public school teachers had students with limited English proficiency in their classrooms, but only one quarter of those teachers had received training for working with them (Kewal Ramani, Gilbertson, Fox, and Provasnik, 2007). These disparities demonstrate that the cultural gap between public school students and teachers as well as pre-service teachers is large and growing (Cochran-Smith, 2000). Education in many schools with high minority enrollment is in a state of crisis, with far too many students not learning, becoming disengaged and dropping out (Sleeter, 2001; Gay, 2000).

Nieto (2004) suggests that many teachers see students from socially subordinated groups from a deficit perspective, thereby setting lower academic expectations and treating them in ways that stifle learning. In order to move beyond these misconceptions, teachers must challenge potentially racist notions and develop affirming views toward diversity (Nieto & Bode, 2008; Sleeter 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1999; Giroux, 1994), and develop sociocultural consciousness (Nieto, 2004). Sociocultural consciousness, as defined by Villegas and Lucas (2007), is “the awareness that a person’s worldview is not universal but is profoundly influenced by life experiences, as mediated by a variety of factors, including race, ethnicity, gender, and social class” (p. 31).

Some teachers choose to adapt a color- and culture-blind ideology in their classrooms, which is premised on the belief that racism and discrimination can be eliminated simply by ignoring it (Lorde, 1982). However, the research literature suggests that “in practice, student learning opportunities may be hindered when teachers fail to consider their own and their students’ racial and cultural backgrounds in their P-12 work and instead adopt color-and culture-blind beliefs, ideologies, and practices” (Milner,

2007, p. 392). Banks (2001) states that when the color-blind approach is taken by teachers and others representing the dominant group, it often reveals “a privileged position that refuses to legitimize racial identifications that are very important to people of color and that are often used to justify inaction and perpetuation of the status quo” (p. 12).

### **Scope of Research**

In 2001, ten teachers from Western Massachusetts were selected to participate on a thirty-day study tour of Vietnam, Cambodia and Thailand, funded by the Fulbright-Hays Group Projects Abroad program of the United States Department of Education, and sponsored by Five Colleges Incorporated and the Center for International Education at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. These countries were once home to a large group of immigrants who resettled in Western Massachusetts following decades of war and genocide, and whose children now represent a small but significant population in area public schools. The primary goal of the study tour was to update teacher knowledge of contemporary Southeast Asia by providing opportunities and resources to teachers that would allow them to collect resource materials, develop culturally relevant curricula, and deepen their understanding of people and cultures through interactive activities and lessons (see Appendix B). To this end, the study tour was organized to accommodate a variety of activities where participating teachers had the opportunity to visit cultural and historical sites in the host countries where they attended cultural performances, met with administrators, teachers and students at schools and universities, discussed initiatives and projects sponsored by various non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and spend some

time exploring on their own. Group meals and debriefing meetings were conducted regularly and teachers were encouraged to share their reflections with their colleagues.

Three concepts: globalization, transnationalism, and diaspora, were central themes incorporated into the study tour curriculum to facilitate a deeper understanding of various Southeast Asian cultures and their connection to populations in the United States.

The study tour's objectives were as follows:

1. To increase awareness, knowledge, and understanding of transnational relations, identities, and communities in local and global contexts of Southeast Asia;
2. To enhance teachers' ability to design new curriculum and use classroom materials that will more effectively help them address the educational needs of diverse students, especially immigrant-refugee youth;
3. To disseminate new information, curriculum, and resources about Southeast Asia as an ongoing outreach commitment to teachers, parents and communities; and
4. To strengthen collaboration between the higher education institutions, the public school systems, and the Southeast Asian communities in Massachusetts.

Teachers from the Springfield, Northampton, Hadley, and Amherst, Massachusetts school districts were selected based on a short essay describing their interest in the program, and recommendations from their school's administration.

Following acceptance, teachers participated in a series of three orientation sessions that provided logistical information, including itinerary, travel and accommodation details,

program goals and expectations, as well as lectures providing background information on the countries to be visited (see Appendix C).

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this research was to examine individual teacher perceptions of the significance and outcomes of an international, professional development study tour to Southeast Asia that took place in 2001. This study sought to develop a more comprehensive understanding of what the longer-term, perceived effects were, and to investigate more deeply how individual teacher's personal and professional lives were affected as they reflected on the meaning of their experiences over time. Merryfield (2000), in her study of outstanding teacher educators who engaged in multicultural and global education, found that the real meaning derived from an intercultural event or experience is often construed in retrospect over time rather than during the actual lived experience itself. Moreover, the meaning an individual constructs from his/her experience overseas is largely a personal endeavor, which varies based on that person's identity, perception of power, and past experiences, which also lends itself to more qualitative analysis (Rossman & Rallis, 2003).

### **Research Questions**

This study sought to answer the following questions:

- Questions about the efficacy of international study tours and study abroad programs as a pedagogical tool for multicultural education. Do such experiences increase cultural understanding, sensitivity, and empathy towards people from diverse cultural backgrounds? If so, how and why?

- Questions about the efficacy of international study tours and study abroad programs as a catalyst for the development of critical thinking and reflection skills. In what ways do such experiences provide opportunities for participants to critically reflect on their own cultural identity and resultant worldview?
- Questions about the efficacy of experiential and affective learning pedagogies in professional development programs. What are the benefits of using these types of pedagogies?

Recognizing that issues of identity and identity awareness vary among individuals, the use of phenomenological interviews was intentionally chosen to provide context so that any perceived developmental changes that participants reported could be put into perspective. Through this technique I hoped to develop a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the teacher's life, including those conditions and events that contributed not only to his/her decision to participate in the study tour but also his/her resultant worldview.

The term "worldview" has many variations in its definition. It is used here to refer to a mental model of reality; a perception of the world; a framework of ideas and attitudes about the world, its people and cultures.

### **Parameters and Limitations**

As a qualitative study based on phenomenology and the reflections of the participants, this research was limited in its size, scope, generalizability and statistical significance. While it does give us the unique opportunity to consider how this particular study tour may have impacted the personal and professional lives of those who agreed to

participate in this study, it was further limited by the fact that our understanding and subsequent interpretation of significance was largely based on those words alone and nothing else. Further complicating analyses were the researcher's own cultural habits of mind and related worldview, which in this case reflect a culturally Western, or more specifically American bend. My hope and belief was that by providing details of my own position in relation to the research, the reader has the necessary knowledge to draw his/her own inferences as to what, if any, significance can be made from my analysis of the data and subsequent findings. As Strauss and Corbin (1998) point out, "qualitative methods can be used to obtain the intricate details about phenomena such as feelings, thought processes, and emotions that are difficult to extract or learn about through more conventional research methods (p. 11)."

Other possible limitations include my role in the project as both researcher and the traveling logistics coordinator of the program. The limitation I considered was that some of the participants might not have felt wholly comfortable saying what they really felt because they might have been concerned that they would hurt my feelings. I certainly had no power or influence to affect their responses, especially seven years afterwards, but I raise this possibility as one potential, however unlikely, limitation to the study.

After conducting the interviews, they were transcribed by the researcher and then e-mailed back to the interviewees so that they could review them and make changes to sections they felt mischaracterized what they were trying to say. Transcribed data selections were also shared with other qualitative researchers in a Qualitative Data Analysis class in order to gain perspectives on other possible interpretations of the data, and further validate the analysis of the researcher.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

The purpose of this literature review is to synthesize the research base on the outcomes and effects of study abroad programs as a component of multicultural teacher education for pre and in-service teachers. Although the benefits of study abroad have been well documented in the context of undergraduate education in a variety of fields and disciplines, research on the impact of such programs on teachers as it relates to issues of diversity and multiculturalism is still relatively limited.

This literature review begins by highlighting the rapidly changing demographics of public school students as compared to a relatively static teaching force with regard to race, ethnicity and cultural background. It then examines teacher attitudes towards cultural diversity and perceptions of identity before defining the theoretical foundations of multicultural education and reviewing its practical implications with respect to teacher education. In particular, this review focuses on the use of study abroad programs as a pedagogical tool to facilitate the development of sociocultural consciousness and prepare culturally responsive teachers in ways that affirm diversity and promote cultural understanding, knowledge and empathy. This literature review also provides a theoretical framework, namely that of experiential education and transformative learning, which informs the use of study abroad as a methodology to better prepare teachers to teach more equitably in a multicultural and diverse society.

## **Public School Students and Teachers**

### **Student Diversity and Teacher Homogeneity**

The demographics of public school students in the United States have shifted significantly over the past thirty years. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) in 1972, 22 % of elementary and secondary public school students were of racial/ethnic minority backgrounds (Villegas & Lucas, 2007). By 2004, the NCES reported that racial/ethnic minority students accounted for 42% of total enrollments in United States public schools (U.S. Department of Education, 2004). By contrast, the teaching force in 2003-04 was 83.1% non-Hispanic white, 7.9% black, 6.2% Hispanic, and 1.3% Asian/Pacific Islander, and .5% American Indian/Alaskan Native. Thirty nine percent of public school teachers had students with limited English proficiency in their classrooms, but only one quarter of those teachers had received training for working with them (Kewal Ramani et al. 2007).

The disparity in academic achievement between white students and their peers representing diverse racial and cultural backgrounds indicates the continuation of a troubling trend that many argue is rooted in a legacy of discrimination and institutional racism (Nieto & Bode, 2008). According to the National Center for Education Statistics in 2006, 10.6 % of black students and 22.1% of Hispanic students between the ages of sixteen and twenty-four years old dropped out before completing high school compared to 5.8% of white students (NCES, 2008). SAT scores from the 2005-06 academic year highlight similar disparities, with white students scoring sixty-four points higher on the critical reading section than the combined average of all other racial/ethnic groups for which statistics were available (NCES, 2008).



Another problematic area is the failure of many educators to recognize the cultural differences within broadly categorized racial and cultural groups. For example, while statistics may indicate that Asian students generally do well academically, the tendency to group all Asians together detracts from the fact that certain subgroups that are identified as Asian may indeed be experiencing higher degrees of failure than other Asian subgroups. The result of such broad generalizations is the perpetuation of racial and cultural stereotypes based on physical characteristics, which in turn overlooks the problems of specific ethnic subgroups in need of greater academic support and resources (Nieto & Bode, 2008). In summary, these disparities demonstrate not only that the cultural gap between public school students and teachers is large and growing, but also that there continues to be widely held misperceptions about race and culture as they relate to educational achievement (Cochran-Smith, 2000).

### **Teacher Attitudes and Perceptions of Diversity**

Many educational researchers point to the lack of cultural awareness among teachers as one of the major reasons why so many students representing diverse backgrounds have difficulty succeeding academically. According to Ladson-Billings (2006), many prospective and novice teachers regularly and loosely use the word “culture” as an explanation for student patterns of behavior they cannot explain or remediate, yet learn nothing about what it means or its significance to students in their teacher education programs. Because of this, “culture is regularly used as a code word for difference and perhaps deviance in the world of teacher education” (p. 107). Nieto and Bode (2008) suggests that many teachers see students from socially subordinated

groups from a deficit perspective, thereby setting lower academic expectations and treating them in ways that stifle learning. Sleeter (2001), in her review of research studies on pre-service teacher preparation for multicultural schools, found that most white pre-service student teachers were fairly naïve and had little awareness or understanding of discrimination and racism. Su (1996) found that many white pre-service teachers regarded programs meant to remedy racial discrimination as discriminatory towards white people.

In addition to not recognizing the importance of cultural identity and its connection to student achievement, Tatum (2003) argues that many white teachers often don't see themselves as having a cultural identity, which becomes problematic when confronting issues of equity and oppression. Furthermore, research suggests most white pre-service teachers lack an awareness or understanding of discrimination, especially racism (Avery & Walker, 1993; King, 1991; Su, 1996), and instead resort to the use of a colorblind approach to cope with their inability to effectively manage their classrooms (McIntyre, 1997; Valli, 1995).

Milner (2007) found that student learning is adversely affected when teachers fail to consider their own and their students' racial and cultural backgrounds and "instead adopt color and culture-blind beliefs, ideologies, and practices" (p. 392). Such beliefs and ideologies that ignore or even discount the importance of racial, cultural and ethnic identity among students from diverse background sends the message that Banks (2001) writes, "reveals a privileged position that refuses to legitimize racial identifications that are very important to people of color and that are often used to justify inaction and perpetuation of the status quo" (p.12).

Pang and Sablan (1998) found that many pre-service and in-service teachers are ambivalent about their ability to teach African American children and that their feelings of efficacy decline as they move from student teaching to full-time roles. Nieto and Bode (2008) point out that many teachers tend to avoid discussions about racism in their classrooms because of the awkwardness and discomfort they cause. This may in part be due to the teacher's own lack of practical experience or understanding of such issues. Developing a critical consciousness, they argue, allows teachers to understand the historical and contemporary context of discriminatory practices in our institutions and our society at large. Villegas and Lucas (2007) argue that teachers need to be aware of the role that schools play in both perpetuating and challenging inequality in order to make positive change. Although a large proportion of pre-service teachers anticipate working in culturally diverse classrooms, very few have significant cross-cultural knowledge or experience working with culturally diverse populations (Nieto & Bode, 2008; Sleeter, 2001; Gay, 2002).

## **Multicultural Education**

### **History and Rationale**

Multicultural education was originally conceived during the Civil Rights Movement as a way for students and teachers to understand one another's history and celebrate the cultural diversity found within our communities (Goodman & Carey, 2004; Grant, 1995; Nieto & Bode, 2008). Its importance continues to grow as the racial, ethnic, and linguistic demographics of the United States school population continue to become more diverse (Villegas & Lucas, 2007). O'Brien (2006) points out that despite court rulings and legislation guaranteeing equal rights for all students in school, the reality on

the ground was and still is quite different. Students from diverse ethnic, racial and cultural backgrounds tend to be disproportionately represented on the margins both academically and behaviorally; and there is strong evidence indicating that people of African, Asian or Latin American heritage are much more likely to be affected as children by discrimination based on physical and cultural differences than their white peers (Merryfield, 2000; Foster, 1990; Sleeter, 1993). Gay (2002) argues that many teachers are not adequately prepared to teach culturally diverse students and that to date public education in the United States has not been sensitive towards the needs of diverse students; instead expecting them to “divorce themselves from their cultures and learn according to European American cultural norms” (p.114).

Nieto (1998) in her research on multicultural teacher education found that many white pre-service teachers perceive their own identity as “just American” or as not having any ethnicity at all. She points out that this kind of negation is troubling because it allows them to “deny or downplay the privileges they enjoy solely on the basis of their skin color”(p. 18). Furthermore, because of such beliefs, teachers can sidestep discussions of discrimination and structural inequality with their students, and instead portray the United States as a pure meritocracy where success is attained through hard work and perseverance, without consideration to the privileges afforded by race, class or gender. Nieto points out such beliefs are based on “dysconscious racism,” where teachers with little or no experience with people different from themselves hold limited and distorted views of racism “that fails to take into account how inequality is created and perpetuated by the very structures of schools and society that these teachers generally believe promote equality” (p. 18).

How, then, do teachers build their knowledge of culture and ethnicity in order to respond to the needs of culturally diverse students and their parents? Research on learning styles has emphasized the importance of recognizing the social and cultural factors that influence both the teaching and learning processes (Nieto & Rolon, 1997). Effective pre-service and professional development programs should teach teachers to recognize how their own teaching styles and cultural norms may hinder learning for culturally diverse students with different learning styles and preferences. In addition to being self-aware of their own cultural identity, teachers should utilize the existing cultural knowledge and experiences of their students and use those insights to increase access to knowledge (Giroux, 1992). When teacher perceptions and attitudes towards culturally diverse students are positive, student learning is enhanced (Thompson, 2000). Educational performance is tied to the relational domain between teacher and student, and empathy is crucial when teaching culturally diverse students (McAllister, 2002). When teachers demonstrate culturally responsive caring, they expect nothing less than the best from their students because they believe in the intellectual potential of their students.

The culturally responsive teacher, according to Gay (2002), must understand the influence and importance of culture in the lives of their students. She defines culturally responsive teaching as “using the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively” (p. 106). When teaching and learning are situated within the lived experience of ethnically diverse students, they are more likely to become interested and engaged and, as a result, are more likely to attain higher levels of educational achievement (Gay, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 2006).

## **Definition of Multicultural Education**

Nieto and Bode (2008) define multicultural education as “a process of comprehensive school reform and basic education for all students” (p. 44). One of its goals is to bring to light the oppression, discrimination and social inequality in our society resulting because of differences in race, social class, gender, and disability (Lenski, Crumpler, Stallworth, and Crawford, 2005). Because the focus of multicultural education is on the entire educational process, students are encouraged to critically examine and the connection between power and the production of knowledge in our society. Nieto and Bode (2008) describe seven basic characteristics in their definition of multicultural education, including: that it is antiracist education; that it is basic education; that it is important for all students; that it is pervasive; that it is education for social justice; that it is a process; and that it is critical pedagogy. Critical pedagogy, according to Freire (1970), involves critical thinking, reflection, and action. Rather than passively accept the transfer of information, critical pedagogy challenges students to see reality through multiple perspectives, to question and challenge the dominant paradigms of discourse, and to seek answers and make positive change through a process of action and reflection. This type of education recognizes that knowledge is socially constructed and therefore neither neutral nor apolitical (Nieto & Bode, 2008). Critical pedagogy and multicultural education work together as “a form of resistance to dominant modes of schooling” (Sleeter, 1996, p. 2), which reflects the political ideology and worldview of those in power. Multicultural education put simply is good pedagogy that responds to the inequality in our schools and society at large by empowering students to become

critically aware and become activists in building a more equal and just society (Nieto & Bode, 2008; Young, 2008).

The tendency to view multicultural education as a curricular add-on instead of a process of comprehensive school reform is not uncommon among many pre and in-service teachers (Banks, 1995a; Nieto & Bode, 2008). In order for all students to attain educational success, multicultural education must move beyond the heroes and holidays approach, and focus instead on understanding how various forms of discrimination have been institutionalized in both our schools and society (Banks, 1995a; Nieto & Bode, 2008; Sleeter, 2001). One popular misconception is that multicultural education is about celebrating diversity through the addition of ethnic heroes and holidays to the curriculum. As Banks (1988) points out, such approaches often result in the “trivialization of ethnic cultures, the study of their strange and exotic characteristics, and the reinforcement of stereotypes and misconceptions” (p. 37). Instead, multicultural education challenges teachers and students to look critically at the sociopolitical roots of not only racism, but all types of discrimination as a precursor to making positive social change (Nieto & Bode, 2008).

Lenski et al. (2005) state the goal of multicultural education “is to bring to light oppression and social inequality that are based on race, social class, gender, and disability” (p. 86). According to Banks (2004), the main goal of multicultural education is to help students view events and situations from a variety of perspectives in order to develop decision-making and social action skills. One important aspect of multicultural education is that it requires people to examine their own identities in order to better understand how privilege is relegated by those in positions of power. Identity is a

complex concept based on many factors, including individual characteristics, family dynamics, historical, social and political contexts (Tatum, 2003). In facilitating the process of understanding one's own identity and its relation to privilege, Young (2008) introduced the concept of "situated privilege," which posits that there are different levels of privilege an individual is afforded based on how the dominant social group values that person's identity. Understanding how privilege is situated based on identity provides one avenue of exploration of how racism and prejudice are perpetuated by the dominant social and cultural group of a society.

### **Sociocultural Consciousness**

Another purpose of multicultural education is to support teachers and students in challenging stereotypes and preconceptions based on social identity. In order to remedy these preconceptions, teachers must hold affirming views toward diversity and possess sociocultural consciousness (Nieto & Bode, 2008), which involves critically examining the roots of ethnocentrism and understanding that such limiting perspectives are not universally shared and are damaging to both students and society (Villegas & Lucas, 2007). Sociocultural consciousness, as defined by Villegas and Lucas (2007), is:

The awareness that a person's worldview is not universal but is profoundly influenced by life experiences, as mediated by a variety of factors, including race, ethnicity, gender, and social class. (p. 31)

It should be noted that the term "sociocultural consciousness" is neither a new nor original concept. Aside from adding the four specific factors thought to influence worldview, its definition is virtually the same as Robert Hanvey's (1976) definition of "perspective consciousness," which he defined as:



The recognition or awareness on the part of the individual that he or she has a view of the world that is not universally shared, that this view of the world has been and continues to be shaped by influences that often escape conscious detection, and that others have views of the world that are profoundly different from one's own.

Whereas Hanvey was writing specifically about the importance of perspective consciousness in the context of global education, Villegas and Lucas (2007) specifically apply it to the context of multicultural education.

### **Practical Implications of Multicultural Education for Teachers**

While the rationale and purpose of multicultural education may seem clear, finding effective ways to prepare teachers to teach for diversity and multiculturalism are not as readily apparent. Sleeter (2001), in her review of research on pre-service teacher preparation for multicultural schools, reports that the institutional response of many predominantly white teacher education programs has been slow to react to increases in student diversity. Sleeter found that in general, teacher education programs take two different approaches to address the cultural gap between teachers and students. The first approach is to recruit into the teaching profession more ethnically and culturally diverse people who are more representative of the communities in which they will be teaching. The second approach is to “try to develop the attitudes and multicultural knowledge base of predominantly white cohorts of pre-service students” (p. 96). Of the first approach Haberman (1996) argues that the success or failure of most urban teachers is largely based on what they bring to teaching rather than what they learn in a pre-service program. To that end, he suggests that teacher education programs should place a higher degree of emphasis on recruiting and selecting pre-service teachers whose personal attributes,

which include knowledge, experiences, commitment and disposition, will enable them to teach culturally diverse student populations more effectively. The second approach suggests that teacher education programs should emphasize preparing teachers by placing them in community-based, cross-cultural immersion programs that allow them develop a more nuanced and practical understanding of the communities they will be teaching in.

However, while cross-cultural immersion programs can and often do provide teachers with insight into other cultural norms and practices, one of the overlooked benefits of such experiences is how teachers learn and develop new insight and understandings about their own cultural and social identities (Nieto, 1998). Lenski et al. (2005) argue that a more nuanced understanding of their own cultural and social identities allows the preservice teacher to engage in a type of comparative analysis between themselves and their diverse students, which then leads to more culturally responsive curriculum and instruction. Nieto (1998) writes, “An effective program of multicultural teacher education helps all participants shed their cultural blinders, develop an awareness and respect for differences with which they may be unfamiliar, and prepare them for teaching students of all backgrounds with knowledge and care” (p20).

### **Limitations of Multicultural Education Courses**

The effectiveness of stand-alone multicultural education courses for teachers has been researched with mixed results. In her review of research literature, Sleeter (2001) found that much of the research has been dominated by small-scale action research studies yielding data that may be biased due to the fact that most of the research was conducted by instructors studying their own practice. Furthermore, very few studies

examined the impact of multicultural coursework on actual teaching practice. One exception, however, is Lawrence (1997, as cited by Sleeter) who studied the impact of multicultural education coursework on teaching practices for pre-service teachers and found that the carryover varied widely, based mostly on the level of awareness that students had developed prior to the multicultural education courses. Sleeter's (2001) findings suggest "that community-based immersion experiences are more powerful than stand-alone multicultural education courses, yet it is likely that the latter are more prevalent because they are easier to institutionalize" (p. 102). Her review of the research on stand-alone multicultural education courses found that for many pre-service teachers, positive attitudinal shifts resulting from coursework were minimal and tended to be lost after a short period. Sleeter (2001), however, acknowledges the scarcity of reliable data regarding the impact of multicultural education courses due to researcher bias and/or inadequate data collection techniques.

Lenski et al. (2005) found that standalone courses in multicultural education have not had much impact on classroom instructional practices for pre-service teachers. Instead, their research examined the effects of training pre-service teachers to become ethnographic researchers in the communities where their course was being conducted. Their findings revealed that preparing teachers by using ethnographically informed methods seem to be more effective because they required interaction with community members whose culture and perspectives were different than their own. This approach encouraged them to listen to community members, think critically about their own assumptions, and share information, opinions and ideas.

Another limitation of standalone multicultural education courses is their inability to change teacher understanding about institutional racism and other forms of discrimination beyond abstract concepts. Nieto (1998) points to a growing number of studies documenting “the futility of superficial or ‘one shot’ treatments in educating white teachers about diversity” (p. 17).

According to Lenski et al. (2005) multicultural education courses aimed at preparing teachers for cultural complexity usually leads to one of three conditions found later in those teachers’ classrooms, including: “(1) a curriculum centered on the dominant culture, which ignores bias and fails to address inequity; (2) a curriculum which pretends that difference does not exist, thereby denying the experiences of many children in the classroom; or (3) a curriculum that treats multiculturalism as tourism, in which superficial aspects of culture (e.g. holidays and foods) are introduced as curious examples of the ‘other’ (Dermon-Sparks, 1995, p. 87). Instead of a process of comprehensive school reform, multicultural education for many novice teachers becomes a curricular add on, where cultural differences are exotified rather than embraced (Banks, 2001; Nieto & Bode, 2008), and there is no focus on the development of sociocultural consciousness.

### **Alternative Pedagogies for Multicultural Education**

Because of the limitations of standalone multicultural education courses on changing the attitudes and behaviors of pre and in-service teachers, there has been some research on alternative pedagogies that focus on combining coursework with field experiences in a school or community setting. Sleeter (2001), in her review of research studies on the effectiveness of multicultural education coursework combined with field

experiences, found generally positive results in teacher attitudes towards diverse students, although some studies found that some field experience reinforced negative stereotypes. These field experiences ranged in activity from requiring preservice teachers to engage in ethnographic research in culturally diverse schools and communities, to tutoring children from diverse cultural backgrounds.

According to Cushner (2007), teacher education and schooling in general continue to address culture learning from a cognitive perspective despite a growing body of research indicating the critical role that first-hand experience plays in the development of intercultural competencies. Study abroad programs for both pre and in-teachers represent one avenue where such experiential, cross-cultural opportunities can take place. The experience abroad, as Cushner (2007) states, “offers the individual a unique opportunity for intercultural development as it involves both the physical and psychological transitions that engage the cognitive, affective, and behavioral domains” (p. 29). Furthermore, such experiences provide an opportunity for teachers to actually feel what it is like to be marginalized and to be perceived as an “outsider” or “the Other,” in ways that can’t be replicated in formal classroom settings (Merryfield, 2000). Such affective learning experiences are significant for teachers who have had limited cross-cultural experiences because they facilitate the development of empathy for others who may be experiencing similar feelings of alienation and isolation due to their real or perceived “outsider” status. Cushner (2007) writes: “This ability to place oneself in another’s shoes encourages the ability to make isomorphic attributions, or similar judgments about another’s behavior. Such a skill is critical to developing effective cross-cultural understanding and maintaining good communication” (p.31). Being able to

directly relate to students who experience such feelings of alienation on a daily basis allows teachers to become more ethno relative and empathetic in their personal and professional interactions with students marginalized by language or cultural differences. These experiences also support what Villegas and Lucas (2007) defined as sociocultural consciousness, which Nieto and Bode (2008) called for as a goal of multicultural education.

### **Experiential Education**

#### **History and Background**

The rationale behind using intentionally structured study abroad experiences as a component of multicultural education for teachers is based first and foremost on the foundational works of John Dewey (1938) and his theory on experiential education. Its relationship to teacher education and study abroad is significant in several respects. First, its critique of traditional education and its inability, or unwillingness, to connect experience to learning has many parallels to traditional teacher education methods, especially with regard to multicultural education. The progressive school, according to Dewey, doesn't rely upon established traditions or institutional habit; rather it is directed by "ideas which, when they are made articulate and coherent, form a philosophy of education" (p. 29). Second, Dewey's emphasis on preparing the young to participate and contribute as citizens of a democracy is as relevant today as it was in the early 1900's. Study abroad programs provide opportunities for students to engage in activities that promote democratic principles. Finally, Dewey's emphasis on the quality of the experience is significant because it acknowledges that experience and education cannot

be directly equated. Some experiences are mis-educative and have the effect of “arresting or distorting the growth of further experience” (p. 25). This observation also applies to study abroad programs that, when not appropriately planned and/or implemented, have the potential to stifle learning and perpetuate negative stereotypes.

Experiential education, as first espoused by Dewey (1938), involves the interrelationship between teacher and student, where direct contact with a subject matter followed by reflective thinking guides the learning process. Dewey (1938) makes it clear that the general principles of what he termed the new or progressive education were not of themselves a solution to the problems found in schools. Rather he saw them as new problems that had to be worked out based on a new philosophy of experience. The traditional education he critiqued rejected the teacher as “agents to which knowledge and skills are communicated and rules of conduct enforced,” (p.18) and instead charged the teacher with the difficult task of guiding the young to learn from quality experiences, from which later experiences could then be linked to and learned from. This principle, which Dewey termed as the principle of continuity, or the experiential continuum, placed the onus on the teacher to discriminate between experiences that s/he found worthwhile educationally and those that s/he did not. The new education emphasized the freedom of the learner, and rejected the external imposition of both fact and conduct of the traditional school. It wasn't that traditional education didn't offer meaningful experiences for the students, but its lack of connection with further experience that he found so problematic. Dewey (1938) writes: “the most important attitude that can be formed is that of desire to go on learning. If impetus in this direction is weakened instead of being intensified, something much more than mere lack of preparation takes place. The pupil is actually

robbed of native capacities which otherwise would enable him to cope with the circumstances that he needs in the course of his life” (p.48).

Other important contributors to the field of experiential education include David Kolb and Roger Fry (1975), who developed a conceptual model of affective learning involving four key components: concrete experience, observation and reflection, the formation of abstract concepts, and testing in new situations. Kolb’s emphasis on the processes associated with making sense of concrete experiences is particularly relevant given the context that it is applicable to people with different learning styles regardless of perceived intelligence or age. As Borzak (1981) explains in his analysis of Kolb’s work:

Experiential learning thus involves a direct encounter with the phenomena being studied rather than merely thinking about the encounter, or only considering the possibility of doing something about it. (p. 9).

Kolb’s approach to learning assumed that different types of learners participated in formal learning situations and that instructional designs needed to account for these different styles. Rooted in both conceptual models, the general theme that emerges from which experiential education and study abroad share broad commonalities is the goal to learn by transforming experience into knowledge, and to use that knowledge for individual and collective development.

### **Transformative Learning**

Jack Mezirow’s theory of transformative learning takes Dewey’s theory of experiential learning and specifically applies to adult learners. His 1975 study of a group of women returning to college after taking an extended leave led him to develop a theory of adult learning based on the process of change, what he termed perspective



transformation, they went through in making the decision to return. Based on this study, Mezirow went on to develop his theory of transformative learning, which specifically focused on adult learners, as opposed to children, because it provided an explanation of the processes required by adults to change their worldview as opposed as to how worldviews are first established (Taylor, 2008). Of transformative learning, Mezirow (1997) writes: “it requires that new information be incorporated by the learner into an already well-developed symbolic frame of reference, an active process involving thought, feelings, and disposition” (p.10).

According to Mezirow: “learning is understood as the process of using a prior interpretation to construct a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of one’s experience in order to guide future action” (Mezirow, 1996, p. 162). Transformative learning, as theorized by Jack Mezirow, helped explain how adults changed their worldview when confronted with a disorienting dilemma. According to Mezirow (1997), the defining condition of being human is the need to understand the meaning of our experiences. Rather than accept meanings passed down by an authority figure and “act on the purposes, beliefs, judgments, and feelings of other” (p. 5), we learn to construct our own interpretations of experiences and meanings in order to effect positive change in the world. Of transformative learning, O’Sullivan (2003) writes:

Transformative learning involves experiencing a deep, structural shift in the basic premises of thought, feelings, and actions. It is a shift of consciousness that dramatically and irreversibly alters our way of being in the world. Such a shift involves an understanding of ourselves and our self-locations; our relationships with other humans and with the natural world; our understanding of relations of power in interlocking structures of class, race and gender; our body awareness, our visions of alternative approaches to living; and our sense of possibilities for social justice and peace and personal joy (p. 327).

Mezirow (1997) described four processes of learning. The first involves elaborating on an existing point of view; the second is to establish new points of view; the third is to transform our point of view. Of this he writes “We can have an experience in another culture that results in our critically reflecting on our misconceptions of this particular group. The result may be a change in point of view toward the group involved. As a result we may become more tolerant or more accepting of members of that group. If this happens over and over again with a number of different groups, it can lead to a transformation by accretion in our governing habit of mind.” (p. 7); the fourth involves transforming our “ethnocentric habit of mind by becoming aware and critically reflective of our generalized bias in the way we view groups other than our own” (p. 7).

Transformative learning, as Mezirow (1991) defines it, is the process of effecting change in our frame of reference, which includes the structures of assumptions through which we understand our experiences. Frames of reference, Mezirow (1991) points out,

Selectively shape and delimit expectations, perceptions, cognition, and feelings... We have a strong tendency to reject ideas that fail to fit our preconceptions, labeling those ideas as unworthy of consideration—aberrations, nonsense, irrelevant, weird, or mistaken. When circumstances permit, transformative learners move toward a frame of reference that is more inclusive, discriminating, self-reflective, and integrative of experience” (p. 5).

Contributing to Mezirow’s theory of transformative learning was his earlier work on perspective transformation, which he defined as a process of becoming critically aware of how and why our assumptions have come to constrain the way we perceive, understand, and feel about the world (Cranton, 1994).

The main tenets of transformative learning are particularly congruent to the goals of multicultural education and study abroad, specifically the emphasis on the meaning

made from experiences, and the understanding of the sociopolitical conditions that facilitate or impede learning, and the need for “learners to become aware and critical of their own and others’ assumptions” (Mezirow, 1997, p, 10). The connection between Mezirow’s research on women returning to college after an extended absence and teachers participating on an international study tour is that both groups involve adult learners that face a disorienting dilemma, which then causes them to critically reflect on their prior assumptions and change their frame of reference to accommodate the meanings made from their experiences. While there are many theories that inform the process of how teachers are best prepared to teach for multiculturalism and diversity, the concept of using intercultural experiences, such as those commonly experienced during appropriately structured study abroad programs, is intrinsically connected to Dewey’s theory on experiential education and Mezirow’s theories on transformative learning and perspective transformation.

## **Study Abroad**

### **History and Rationale**

Study abroad programs differ in their purposes and objectives. The main element common to all, however, is the actual experience of living, observing and participating in a foreign culture in order to develop new knowledge and understanding of the host country and its people. Much of the research on international study abroad programs focuses upon those that have taken place in formal academic settings, usually with durations of three months or more. These studies have traditionally examined on the impact of such programs on college and high school students and not on adult

professionals (Orndorf, 1998). Shorter study tours, however, are more suited to professionals who are often more constrained in time to participate than younger students. Today, more organizations, both public and private, are offering short-term international study tours to adult professionals as a means to improving cross-cultural understanding and appreciation. These organizations include the Rotary Club International, the Fulbright Hays Group Projects Abroad program, and the Council on International Educational Exchange, to name a few. Most of the research on these short-term programs focused mainly on analyzing impacts on specific knowledge areas. Very little research has been conducted to determine the meaning of such experiences on participants or how they affect their personal or professional lives (Orndorf, 1998).

As O'Brien (2006) notes, institutionalized study abroad programs in the United States have enjoyed a long and rich history that first started between the two world wars, and whose creation was directly related to the advancement of global education (Huang, 1996). Not coincidentally, the United States government also saw the potential of study abroad programs to advance principles of democracy consistent with United States foreign policy interests, particularly in post-War Europe and throughout the Cold War. Amidst the carnage, death and destruction that took place during both World Wars there was a growing recognition that improved understanding of other cultures was a necessary component to avoiding wars in the future. To this end, the United States government and other agencies began sponsoring programs to encourage cross-cultural understanding and knowledge (Speakman, 1966). In 1945, Senator Fulbright initiated an international exchange program to facilitate the exchange of both students and educators with the purpose of sharing educational concepts and increasing cultural understanding (Fulbright,

1989). More than three decades later in 1976, Senator Fulbright addressed a crowd at the national convocation on international exchange and stated that:

International educational exchange is the most significant current project designed to continue the process of immunizing mankind to the point, we would hope, that man can learn to live in peace... We must try to expand the boundaries of human wisdom, empathy, and perception, and there is no way of doing that except through education. (Cited in Orndorf, 1998, p.13)

The popularity of study abroad programs continues today primarily as a result of globalization and its enormous impact on international business and trade. According to the Institute of International Education in the academic year 2005-06, participation in study abroad by American students totaled 223,534, an increase of 8.5% from the previous year (Open Doors, 2007).

### **Research on Study Abroad**

Research findings on the impact and effectiveness of study abroad programs in general have been overwhelmingly positive. Wood (1982) conducted a study of high school students participating in a Rotary Club study abroad program. He found that students developed new understandings that made them less likely to blindly support the political positions of their native country, and instead to seek their own understanding based on their experiences and knowledge. In comparison to students who had not participated, these students were more open to differing opinions and cultures. Kuh and Kauffmann (1985) compared 120 students who participated in a study abroad program with similar groups who did not and found that the sojourning students returned with a changed worldview, including increased interest in reflective thought, interest in the

welfare of others, increased self-confidence and feelings of well being. Gibson (1991) found that negative experiences overseas also had the potential of creating a greater awareness of others. Her research found that students developed a better understanding of what it was like to be a minority because of their experience being isolated and stereotyped in a foreign country. This experience led the students to develop an affective understanding of the negative effects of prejudice and discrimination. Merryfield (2000) found that the experience of living in another country often led participants to see contradictions in their own society, leading to “new knowledge of inequities and a rethinking of one’s identity and the status quo” (p. 436). Living overseas also played a role in changing political perspectives with participants looking more critically at the actions of their government on the world stage.

Duration of a study abroad program also seems to have a definite effect on the attitudes of participants. Gibson (1991) found that programs that were too short had the potential of creating an embellished reading of the culture, while longer programs allowed students to experience the culture and get to know the people on a more personal level. Smith (1984) also cited length of stay as being a factor in attitudinal changes in study abroad for participants. Programs too short had the potential of negatively impacting a student's perception of the host culture by providing only superficial knowledge. Despite this, Cushner (2007) found that regardless of the level of which it takes place, the experience abroad “offers the individual a unique opportunity for intercultural development as it involves both physical and psychological transitions that engage the cognitive, affective, and behavioral domains” (p. 29). He also notes that this

experience occurs twice- upon entry to the host culture, and again upon reentry back to the home culture.

Abrams (1979), in his research of students participating in the Antioch Education Abroad program in the 1960s, found that there was strong evidence linking experiences abroad with a variety of positive outcomes among participating students, including improved grades, higher likelihood to complete their academic program of study, and higher degree of satisfaction with respect to career choices. The Antioch Education Abroad program was unique at the time because of its focus on cultural immersion. Instead of transplanting students to an Antioch colony abroad, students were also required to work in culturally immersive settings where they had to interact with people and colleagues from the host culture on a regular basis. Abrams' (1979) findings suggest that there is a positive correlation between participant involvement in cultural immersion activities and changes with respect to attitudinal and behavioral outcomes. Long-term changes were also cited as significant. Abrams writes, "We found certain enduring effects of this experience of living, studying, and working abroad. Seven to seventeen years later, a great number of the alumni consider this experience one of the most important they ever had. They feel that it had a significant influence upon their subsequent educational and job decisions, and their way of living" (p. 177).

The effects of a study abroad program with respect to attitudinal change are also related to some extent to the difference between the home and host culture (Orndoff, 1998). Gibson's (1991) research found that a study abroad experience that took place between two industrialized Western cultures would generally result in less of a shift in attitude than between two significantly different cultures. She also found that the

“foreignness” and duration of a program played a significant role in the degree to whether students experienced culture shock. Shames and Alden (2005) in their research on the effectiveness of study abroad for students with learning disabilities also found that novelty of the host culture and the intensity of experience contributed to higher degrees of attitudinal change. Pettigrew (2001) in his review of research on prejudice formation and reduction found that international contact had a greater impact on reducing prejudice than within-nation interethnic contact.

Kauffman (1985) found that the choice of study abroad site also affected student outcomes, with students who traveled to developing countries coming back with higher levels of altruism, including greater sensitivity towards the needs of others, and a greater desire to help. These changes were generally long-lasting and contributed to increased self-confidence, self-esteem, and analytical thought.

### **Impact on Teachers**

Research on the use of international study tours as a component of teacher education is limited and generally focuses on one of two distinct domains: the cognitive and the affective. Whereas research on the cognitive domain tends to focus on how a study abroad experience enhances a participant’s knowledge of certain content-specific areas (Cushner, 2007), research on the affective domain has greater relevance to multicultural education because of its focus on attitudes and perceptions. Cushner (2007) reports that teacher education programs tend to address culture learning primarily from a cognitive orientation despite the growing body of research demonstrating the critical role that first hand experience plays in enhancing intercultural development. Studies on how



study abroad programs benefit the cognitive domain tend to reflect a more quantitative bend, using data collected via standardized, Likert type instruments and measuring participants knowledge of new factual information about the host country, while research on the affective domain tends to be more qualitative in nature, analyzing instead how their attitudes may have shifted as a result of an intercultural experience.

Wolfer's (1990) study found that although global workshops were negligibly effective for expanding teachers' global attitudes, there was an incidental relationship between world travel of thirty days or more and the global attitude of subject teachers. Her study makes the distinction between the "cognitive" and "affective" approaches of programs and activities aimed at developing teacher global mindedness. Whereas most professional development workshops focus on the cognitive domain, or "content" lessons, i.e., developing better textbooks, emphasizing world issues, expanding the knowledge base of students, revising the curriculum, and changing world economic forces, the affective domain emphasizes empathy and understanding through more "process-oriented" lessons, i.e., problem solving, discussions, small group instruction, attitude adjustment and team teaching. Travel, Wolfer (1990) concluded, is an essentially affective and interactive human effort that is more likely to contribute to the development teachers' global mindedness than those programs that are limited to the cognitive domain alone.

As mentioned previously, research examining the affective impacts of study abroad as it relates to teacher perceptions and attitudes toward culturally diverse people is limited. Part of the problem may be that travel and the affective lessons learned through experience are hard to generalize across individuals with different levels of sociocultural

consciousness. Moreover, the meaning an individual constructs from his/her experience overseas is largely a personal endeavor, which varies based on that person's identity, perception of power, and past experiences. Merryfield (2000) also points out that the real meaning derived from a study abroad experience is often construed in retrospect over time, rather than during the actual lived experience itself. McCarthy (1998) elaborates in his finding that study abroad experiences themselves have no essentialist effect or meaning; rather it is how the experiences are interpreted, which depends on one's perception of identity and power, from which meaning is constructed.

Stauffer (1973) examined the change in attitude among prospective teachers after a one-term practicum in Sierra Leone. Using instruments used to measure attitude change, including the Teaching Situation Reaction Test (TSRT) and the Teacher Career Survey (TSC), which were administered to both sojourners and homebound teacher candidates, he found that upon return the overseas group placed more emphasis on pedagogical interests, international concerns, and social concerns than the control group. This discernable difference between those who had participated in a foreign study experience and those who remained at home led him to attest to the conceptual and experiential gains made in cross-cultural understanding, and the altered discovery of self.

O'Brien (2006) found that teachers who participated in a Fulbright program to Kenya and Tanzania found that "being there" was a critical component of the teachers' experience because it led to intimate, thought provoking encounters with local people, which then contributed to learning through both personal and group reflections. The lessons learned through these encounters and reflections afterwards ranged from issues of identity to factual information about the countries they visited.

Casale-Giannola (2000) conducted a qualitative study of 12 teachers with experience participating in international programs. Her findings revealed that participants developed meaning from their international experience by analyzing, reflecting and making decisions based on personal history, joint actions and individual beliefs and actions. Furthermore, she found that not all meaning making stemmed from positive experiences or ended in positive outcomes, and that there is evidence that international experiences also have the potential to narrow participant perspectives based on individual perceptions of experiences.

### **International Student Teaching**

Cushner (2007) reports that in recent years there has been more research on the impact of international student teaching on the personal and professional development of preservice teachers. His investigation of students participating in the Consortium for Overseas Student Teaching program “support the notion that students learn a significant amount about themselves as well as others, primarily by making the effort to understand another’s point of view” (p. 31). As a result of their student teaching experiences, participants become more empathetic, and begin to question their stereotypes of others as well as previously unexamined aspects of their own culture. Mahan and Stachowski (1992), in their research of students participating in The Overseas Student Teaching Project at Indiana University found that the great majority of participants perceived that their empathic dispositions grew as a result of their international student teaching experience. They conclude that the most effective teacher education programs with regard to promoting cross-cultural awareness are those that incorporate cultural immersion through overseas student teaching.

Another widely reported impact of study abroad for both student teachers and students in general are increased self-confidence and efficacy (Cushner, 2007; Mahan & Stachowski, 1992; Shames & Alden, 2006). The experience of adapting to a new culture, living, and working environment requires individuals to “confront their personal anxieties and challenge their own limitations, thus providing the space that facilitates growth of self-confidence and esteem, increased adaptability, resourcefulness and persistence” (p. 32).

Some studies find that study abroad experiences do not result in significant change among participants. Morrow and Williams (1989) found that although teachers involved in a study abroad program were more likely to implement ideas and materials obtained during their international experience into their curriculum, there otherwise was no significant relationship between global education perspectives and their international experience. Cushner (2007) draws the distinction between immersion activities such as student teaching and traveling as a tourist, in which the latter remains disconnected from the deeper experiences and relationships that lead to critical reflection about issues of identity and culture. This may explain in part the findings of Morrow and Williams.

### **Study Abroad and Multicultural Teacher Education**

The goals of multicultural education and study abroad share many similarities with respect to the development of cultural understanding and empathy. In researching how teachers develop positive attitudes towards culturally diverse students Suarez (2003) found that teachers who learned experientially the concept of “cultural otherness” were more apt to develop “an empathetic disposition critical to teaching diverse populations”

(p. 180), whereas teachers with no experience in other cultures were less apt to be as effective with diverse students. Her findings support other research studies indicating a strong correlation between international experiences and the development of empathetic dispositions of teachers.

Merryfield's (2000) study of the lived experience of teacher educators chosen by peers for their success preparing teachers in both multicultural and global education identified the double consciousness people of color feel within the United States as formative to their empathetic dispositions. Specifically, teacher educators of color in her study acquired an understanding of discrimination and "outsider" status through their own lived experiences growing up in the United States, while many of the middle-class white teacher educators had their most profound experiences while living outside of their own country. Merryfield (2000) writes:

There are significant differences between being an outsider in one's own country and being an outsider in another country, since the outsider within never experiences the comfort and security of the mainstream/center. For many whites, it is the beginning of insights that led them to try to understand the experiences and perspectives of people of color or people in poverty in their own country (p. 439).

Traveling and living abroad gives people the experience to feel what it is like to live outside the mainstream and to be perceived as "the Other." It also allows people to experience what happens to their identity when they are no longer in control (Cushner, 2007).

Ladson-Billings (2006) suggests the need for prospective teachers to recognize themselves as cultural beings. In doing so, "they begin to recognize the cultural underpinnings of their own beliefs, attitudes, and practices, they may become more open

to the power of culture to shape the learning and experiences of the students they will teach” (p. 109). To accomplish this, she recommends that teacher education programs become more global so that prospective teachers can see more of the world, specifically how schooling and learning are tied to culture in various settings.

### **Conclusion**

The growing ethnic, racial and cultural diversity of students attending public schools in the United States requires teachers to have a deeper and more nuanced understanding of issues of identity and culture in order for them to teach more fairly and equitably. This is especially true in light of the continued disparity in academic achievement between white students and their peers representing diverse racial and cultural backgrounds. Yet despite the mandate of professional organizations such as the National Council for the Accreditation of Teachers (NCATE) to require multicultural education as a component of accredited teacher education programs, and despite research demonstrating the value of experience in the development of cultural understanding and empathy, there are still relatively few experiential opportunities for teachers to develop an affective understanding of how concepts related to identity and culture influences the lives of students. Intentionally designed study abroad programs, however, provide one avenue for teachers to experience first hand what it feels like to be an “outsider” in a foreign culture.

While the research base on study abroad programs for high school and undergraduate students is vast, there is still limited research on the impact of study abroad on multicultural teacher education. Clearly, this is an area in need of more

dedicated research. Despite the dearth of research, what is available generally indicates that appropriately structured study abroad programs for teachers provide affective and experiential learning opportunities that allow participants to expand and deepen their understanding of both the host culture and of their own cultural identity. These shifts in worldview and sociocultural consciousness are significant because they are consistent with the goals of multicultural education. Such experiences have the potential of increasing teacher empathy and understanding of students from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds so that multicultural pedagogy and curricula can be developed to accommodate an equitable learning environment for all students.

### **CHAPTER 3**

#### **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS**

This study explored the perceived long-term impact areas of an international study tour to Southeast Asia for public school teachers that took place in 2001. The thirty-day study tour was funded by a federal grant. It was proposed to address the general lack of contemporary knowledge among local teachers about Southeast Asia's diverse people and cultures, despite the growing influx of students and families from the region, particularly Vietnam and Cambodia. Ten teachers, whose subject areas and grade level varied, were selected from four school districts in Western Massachusetts based on their interest and ideas to develop culturally relevant curriculum units and collect resource materials based on their study tour experience.

Data collected and analyzed during and immediately following the study tour indicated that teacher knowledge of contemporary Southeast Asia increased as a result of the study tour, specifically as it related to facts about history, geography and culture (Young, 2002). This research study, however, examined the long-term effects of the study tour as it related to their perception of the overall impact of the experience using phenomenological interviews as the primary data collection method. To accomplish this, I conducted in-depth interviews with nine of the original participants with the purpose of developing a more comprehensive understanding of the long-term effects this experience had on both their personal and professional lives. Specifically, I was interested in exploring individual teacher perceptions regarding the following areas: 1) whether the study tour experience has had any lasting effects related to their development of cultural



understanding, sensitivity, and empathy towards people from diverse cultural backgrounds; 2) whether the study tour provided the context and opportunity for them, as individuals and/or as a group, to engage in critical thinking about their own cultural assumptions and resultant worldview; and 3) how they perceived the study tour experience as a professional development opportunity using affective and experiential learning pedagogies.

My approach to this inquiry captured the lived experience of individual teachers using a phenomenological methodology. This approach revealed a more comprehensive view of not only those significant events that took place during the study tour, but also those formative experiences from each participant's past that provided a more nuanced understanding of how and why certain experiences may have impacted individuals differently. In using an approach that acknowledged the importance of personal stories and reflection as the narrative, each participant had the opportunity to provide the context and rationale of how and why meaning was made from a particular experience and not from others. In using this protocol to explore individual teacher perceptions related to my research inquiry, the following general questions were raised:

- Describe your prior experience(s) with people representing culturally diverse backgrounds both personally and professionally. Did participating on the study tour have any impact on your views and/or attitude with regard to matters of cultural diversity? If so, how and why?
- Describe your most vivid memories of the study tour and the meaning you have made as a result of those experiences. What assumptions regarding the people

and culture of the host countries did you hold prior to the study tour? Which assumptions proved correct and which ones proved wrong?

- Have you changed your way of thinking about the world and its people? If so, how and why?
- Have you changed your way of thinking about your own culture and its people? If so, how and why?
- Compare and contrast this professional development experience with other pre and in-service teacher education programs you have participated in. From a pedagogical standpoint, what are the pros and cons of more experiential models such as the study tour, as compared to more traditional methodologies?

### **Phenomenology**

This qualitative research study drew heavily on the phenomenological tradition of inquiry, which van Manen (1990) wrote “aims at gaining a deeper understanding of the nature or meaning of our everyday experiences” (p. 9). Phenomenology first started out as a philosophical movement founded in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century by German philosopher, Edmund Husserl, before moving on to its more current adaptation as an empirical research methodology. Bailey (2007) noted that Husserl’s original approach to what he termed *transcendental phenomenology* was for the researcher to take all appropriate steps to transcend or remove any personal bias from the phenomenon being studied as a way to ensure credibility in the research process. Realizing the enormous challenges this presented, Martin Heidegger, a former student of Husserl’s, advanced another perspective known as *hermeneutic phenomenology*, which presupposed some familiarity of the

subject by the researcher, but rather than discount it as damaging to credibility instead acknowledged the potential value it could bring if it were accounted for openly and truthfully. Apart from this distinction, the generally agreed upon purpose of phenomenology is to understand more deeply the lived experience of the research participant as it pertains to an event or phenomenon. Moustakas (1994) pointed out that the challenge of this mode of inquiry is to repeatedly examine and reflect upon an event, process or other lived moment in order to come up with a comprehensive understanding of how participants experience, interpret and make meaning of a particular phenomenon.

Van Manen (1990) noted that researchers who engage in phenomenology tend not to prescribe any rigid rules about how to conduct phenomenological research, whereas Seidman (2005) recommends that interviews be conducted over the course of three sessions with each session lasting approximately ninety minutes and addressing the following questions: 1) what was the participant's life like before the experience; 2) what was the participant's life like during the experience; and 3) what meaning does the participant attribute to the experience?

In reconciling these differences, particularly Seidman's (2005) recommendation, I realized that these general recommendations applied to researchers who probably don't have much background knowledge of their participants' lives or the experiences they're reflecting on. I, on the other hand, as both the coordinator and researcher traveling with the group, had spent significant time with the participants both during the thirty days of the study tour, as well as during the orientation sessions and post-trip meetings. Moreover, I had already collected both quantitative and qualitative data from them (see Young, 2002) throughout the process, which gave me both the context and more intimate

understanding of who the teachers were, what their personalities were like, are and why they decided to apply for admission to the study tour. Because of those previously established relationships and the data I had collected in 2001, I was able to use the time for interviews more efficiently, and focus more on their reflections, as well as their perspectives on the meaning of the experience.

In deciding on phenomenological interviews, I also considered the case study approach but felt that I did not have sufficient background knowledge of how and what the teachers taught before the actual study tour to make substantive comparisons. Because case studies typically employ a variety of techniques to gather data (Rossman & Rallis, 2003), and my focus was on eliciting the perception of the teachers as conveyed through their own words, the phenomenological approach seemed a better fit. Additionally, to attempt a case study analysis of how teachers perceived the impact of their overseas experience using observation and field notes as a data gathering technique would have necessitated some familiarity with their practices before they participated in the study tour, which unfortunately I did not have. This would have meant that I would have been unable to contrast how specific teacher practices, behaviors, or attitudes may have shifted as a result of the study tour.

Etherington (2007) emphasized the significance of life stories and narratives as deepening the understanding of a given phenomenon. Collecting these stories, analyzing them and re-presenting them allow us to deepen our understanding of how an individual was affected by a certain experience. Moreover, it acknowledges that reality is socially constructed and that knowledge is situated and created within specific contexts. The relational aspect between the researcher and the researched, or story teller and audience

as Etherington (2007) writes, allows the narrative to deepen because the researcher “may become actively involved in co-constructing previously untold stories by asking curious questions that help thicken and deepen existing stories and invite the teller into territory beyond what is already known to him or her” (p. 600). Thus, using a phenomenological approach allowed me, as the researcher, to ask those curious questions and present a more holistic picture of how an experience was interpreted and assigned meaning by teachers in relation to their other life experiences.

I also was influenced by changes in my own thinking on the overall value of the study tour. Initially, my interest was focused solely on gauging the impact of the study tour on professional practice, i.e. teaching. This was due in part to the belief that identity development and sociocultural consciousness were value-added components of the study tour. Later, as I delved more deeply in the research question and referred back to my conceptual framework, I realized that what I originally considered value-added benefits were in fact the primary reason why the study tour experience had such a great impact on so many of the participants. Mezirow’s (1997) theory of transformative learning adapted well with my conceptual framework because it was broad and inclusive of all the other theoretical frameworks I had been considering, i.e. multicultural education, experiential and affective learning. After more reflective thought, I realized that the theory of transformative learning involved many, if not all, of the processes that could be attributed to the study tour, especially given that it was a theory specific to adult learning and shifting frames of reference.

### **Selection of Research Participants**

The study tour involved one male and nine female public school teachers from Western Massachusetts. Their ages, teaching experience, and subject areas varied, as did the grade levels and schools where they taught (see Appendix A). Of the ten, only one teacher identified as a person of color with the remaining nine identifying as white. In determining the participants I hoped to interview, I considered several factors that influenced my decision. First, I was particularly interested in finding teachers who were still teaching in the public school system. Several of the participants were approaching retirement during the study tour and although they were no longer teaching, I was still interested in interviewing them to find out how the study tour affected them both before and after retirement. The second consideration was finding participants who were still teaching in the Western Massachusetts area, as I strongly felt that face-to-face interviews were more likely to generate more “productive” interviews than those conducted over the phone or via e-mail. Another consideration was finding participants who I felt were more representative of the teaching population in general. As mentioned in the introduction, the vast majority of teachers in public schools today are white, middle-class women. Not surprisingly, the demographics of our nation’s teaching force closely matched the demographics of the study tour group in these regards. In the end, I was fortunate enough to have found nine of the ten participants who all agreed to be interviewed for purposes of this research. To ensure anonymity, each participant was given a pseudonym to protect his/her identity, and each had the option of reviewing transcripts and making changes where they felt their words did not convey the meaning as they intended. This member checking was done via e-mail.

## **Data Collection**

As mentioned in the previous section, this qualitative study relied primarily on data collected through phenomenological interviews conducted with nine of the original participants. Using a more hermeneutic approach and following Seidman's (2005) phenomenological interviewing sequence, I was able to capture a more detailed and nuanced picture of each participant's lived experiences leading up to and during the study tour. These included their perception of life experiences that were formative to the development of his/her worldview, including aspects related to culture and identity. I was also interested in finding out what motivated them to pursue a career in teaching and how they perceived their teacher education programs.

To supplement the data obtained through interviews, I also utilized the following sources of data:

- Field notes. During the study tour, I kept a journal of day-to-day activities as our group immersed themselves in the local cultures.
- Videotape. Recorded throughout the study tour, I have compiled approximately eight hours of digital video of the study tour teachers visiting local sights, meeting with indigenous groups, conducting group-debriefing meetings, and sharing personal reflections.
- E-mails and other communication with members. In the weeks and months following the conclusion of the study tour, I stayed in contact with some of the teachers to follow up on questions related to my master's thesis.
- Program assessment feedback. Assessment questionnaires with

## **Data Analysis**

Data analysis procedures closely mirrored those used for the pilot study leading to this more comprehensive research inquiry. This included conducting in-depth phenomenological interviews with nine of the teachers, which I then transcribed into a word processor using voice-to-text software. This required me to carefully listen to the interview and repeat word for word the entire sequence of the interview. My initial reasoning for doing this was to avoid having to type what amounted to hundreds of pages of interview data, but I also found that in listening and repeating the words of the participants so carefully, I was catching aspects that I had not fully heard or comprehended at the actual time of the interview, which I made note of. After completing the process, I reviewed each transcript in its entirety and wrote analytical memos corresponding to those areas that struck me as having been particularly poignant, insightful and/or meaningful to the participant. I then began the process of open coding, which Strauss and Corbin (1998) describe as “the analytic process through which concepts are identified and their properties and dimensions are discovered in the data” (p. 101). In doing so, I paid particular attention to how participants described their early years growing up and going to school, trying to identify those formative incidents that contributed to their initial worldview, or what Mezirow (1991) referred to as their “frame of reference” (p.5). The final step of analysis involved comparing the major themes and looking for similarities among teachers based on similar experiences. When patterns emerged, they represented new information explaining the cause and effect of a certain experience or phenomenon, or what is commonly referred to as grounded theory.



Open coding refers to a conceptualization process that involves the labeling of phenomena, which Strauss and Corbin (1998) define as abstract representations of events and interactions that the researcher identifies as being significant to developing an understanding of what is taking place. This process involved a systematic and close examination of the data in order to identify discrete concepts, which then were compared to other emerging concepts and grouped accordingly, based on similarities, to form broader categories. Categories were then defined more specifically in terms of general characteristics (properties and dimensions), and newer concepts that fell into a general category but differed in ways that were more specific to a certain situation were assigned to subcategories in order to distinguish both their relevance and significance.

Grounded theory, as defined by Strauss and Corbin (1998), refers to theory that is derived from data that is “systematically gathered and analyzed through the research process” (p.12). It refers to a methodology that emphasizes that theory be built on the analytical interpretation of data, and not on preconceived theories. The researcher must start out with a clean slate and build theory based on what is observed and how the data is analyzed and interpreted rather than test previous theories. Grounded theory is premised on the evolution of theory emerging from the data rather than vice versa.

In reconciling the differences posed by employing a hermeneutic phenomenology with aspects of grounded theory, my belief was that there were both known and unknown aspects related to the research inquiry that were illuminated by the data analysis process. In that sense, the theoretical framework of this inquiry was both top down and bottom up, with themes grounded in theory either substantiated or discounted, such as Mezirow’s

(1997) theory of transformative learning and Villegas and Lucas' (2007) theory of sociocultural consciousness, and new themes that emerged from the data.

Rossmann and Rallis (2003) asserted that qualitative data analysis is an ongoing process involving deep immersion with the data collected, systematically organizing the data into themes and patterns, bringing meaning to the themes, and writing it all up in a way that informs and interests readers. They revealed that the open-ended structure of phenomenological interviews elicits broad categories and sub themes "to elaborate the topography of meaning expressed by the participants" (p. 276). They also pointed out that it can be a messy process, involving any number of changes to the different aspects of the research design. Despite these potential pitfalls, the methodology I have chosen remains highly consistent with my goal of presenting evidence that is both contextualized and true to the words and beliefs of the participants.

### **Limitations and Trustworthiness**

In choosing this methodology, I recognized that it would be difficult, if not impossible, to generalize how certain study tour experiences influenced a participant over time. This was because each person came to the program with his/her unique worldview that was shaped by prior life experiences. Likewise, I also recognized that any perceived long-term changes claimed by a teacher would be unique to that individual based on how s/he was able to use prior experiences to make meaning from new ones. Schutz (1967) makes the point that it is not possible to understand another person perfectly, and that if we could we would *be* that other person; the point being that in recognizing our limits of how much we can understand others, "we can still strive to comprehend them by

understanding their actions” (Seidman, 2005, p. 3). In short, my decision to interview using the phenomenological approach had to do with the importance of understanding the lived experience of the individual participant not only during the study tour but up until that point in order to more fully understand how and why the study tour affected them as individuals. Seidman (2005) also points out that the phenomenological methodology has inherent qualities that enhance trustworthiness by 1) putting the participants’ experiences and reflections in context, 2) providing a sequence and structure that allows inconsistencies to be more thoroughly examined and questioned; and 3) providing a venue where the researcher and participants have the opportunity to make sense of themselves through their reflections.

I was also acutely aware of my own potential bias as the researcher who as a child attended public schools and was the occasional target of culturally insensitive comments from both students and teachers alike. In recognizing the potential for some Heideggarian conflict of interest, I was acutely aware of my role as researcher during the interviewing process and made an extra effort to refrain from interjecting my own ideas and opinions so as to not influence the answers of participants. Indeed, it is my hope that my use of hermeneutic phenomenology allowed me to enhance the quality of the study in ways that preserve the trustworthiness of the research process.

### **The Researcher**

As the only child of Chinese immigrants who left China following World War Two and the Chinese civil war, I grew up in predominantly white communities, attending predominantly white public schools in upstate New York. During first grade, I had my

first experience with racism when I was called a racially derogatory slur, which was later followed by a crude chant that for some strange reason many children in my elementary school already knew. As a result, I spent much of my childhood somewhat ashamed and embarrassed at not only my Asian appearance but all things having to do with my Chinese background, including my parents. The lone exception was the famous martial artist and actor, Bruce Lee, of whom I told my peers I was related to. As is common with many children, being different was more of a burden than anything to celebrate or be proud of. Most of my teachers were sympathetic and tried what they could to halt the teasing, but there were also a few who were especially insensitive and, because of their position, actually made things worse. In second grade, for example, my teacher referred to me in class as “the little Chinese boy,” instead of by my name. When I told my mother, she demanded that I go back to him and tell him to address me by my proper name. He replied, “but that’s what you are, aren’t you?” It was only after my mother had a few words with the principal when that ended. Another incident I remember was when a gym teacher asked me in front of the entire class if I knew what a Chinese fire drill was; I embarrassingly replied that I didn’t.

My great epiphany happened shortly after college when I participated in a culture and language program sponsored by the Taiwanese government for overseas students of Chinese descent. The experience was life changing. For the first time in my life I was surrounded by people just like me, people who grew up facing the same stereotypes and feelings of alienation I had throughout my young life. Finally, I was among people who were just like me. It felt liberating. It raised my self-esteem and fostered a new pride of my Chinese heritage. I no longer felt ashamed of who I was; instead I was proud.

With new confidence and a new outlook on life, I looked for other opportunities that would allow me to explore my own and other cultures. After taking a position teaching English as a Second Language (ESL) in Japan, I spent much of the next decade living, working and traveling in various parts of Asia, Europe, and South America. These experiences eventually led to my interest in international education and my acceptance to a master's degree program at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. It was during this time when I was invited by one of my professors to help develop and coordinate the Southeast Asia study tour, which became the research topic of my master's thesis. After I finished my degree, I served as an administrator at a small college where I ran the study abroad office and developed new programs to Central and South America. It was exhilarating to see the academic and personal growth many of those students went through as a result of their study abroad experience; and it is these experiences that grounded my research interest in multicultural education and the development of cultural understanding and empathy through appropriately structured study abroad programs.

### **Summary**

This study explored the long-term impact areas of a professional development study tour to Southeast Asia for public school teachers that took place in 2001. Specifically, this research explored how the study tour experience affected participants' perceptions regarding their understanding of concepts related to cultural diversity, critical thinking, and experiential pedagogies in teacher education. In doing so, this study relied primarily on a phenomenological approach that allowed me, as the researcher, to

establish the context of how and why certain study tour experiences impacted participants in unique and powerful ways.

The following chapters are organized to provide readers with an understanding of the participant's life leading up to the study tour and how the experience impacted him or her. In chapter four, I provide a sketch of each participant that I believe is relevant to developing a basic understanding of who that person is and the formative life experiences that shaped his/her original worldview. In chapter five, I provide a deeper analysis of study tour themes, events, and experiences that participants described as having had an impact on their personal and professional life over time. In chapter six, I summarize my findings and describe their implications for educators and other people interested in developing international study tour for teacher education and/or professional development. This section will be followed by a short summary of recommendations for future research.

## CHAPTER 4

### DATA DISPLAY

*Note: The following section contains transcribed segments of interviews conducted with participants of the study tour. In an effort to provide more clarity without significantly altering the content of the text, I have employed certain techniques that I hope will make the section more readable and easier to understand. In doing so, I have eliminated some of the idiosyncrasies common to oral speech, and employed the use of brackets to signify authorial addition, and ellipses to indicate exclusion of text that either was not relevant to the point(s) being made or grammatically insignificant.*

This chapter displays data obtained through the use of phenomenological interviews conducted with study tour participants from late 2007 to 2009. It is intentionally presented in a modified case study format so that readers will have some context of the personal life of each participant and how certain life experiences may have played a role in how they perceived aspects of the study tour. As such, it is important to note that study tour participants ranged in age and experience from those who had been teaching for just a few years to those who were a just few years away from retiring. To that end, each participant experienced the study tour in unique and deeply personal ways based in large part on their age and background. In choosing which areas to document, I was guided not only by the stories they chose to share during the interviews, but also by a more in-depth understanding of them as characters, which I came to know as a result of the many hours spent together as fellow travelers in museums, minibuses, and hotel bars. The result, I hope, are narratives and descriptions that focus more on those experiences that I interpreted as having a significant impact on that participant's sociocultural consciousness and related worldview.

In presenting this evidence, it seems worth repeating that the results of this particular research inquiry cannot be generalized across teachers. Nor can it be inferred that any perceived changes to worldview were a result of the study tour alone. Rather, they are based on the perceptions of individuals, each of whom came to the program with his or her own unique background, identity, and life experience. Because of this, it seems important to shed some light on the background of the participants, including those past experiences that were both formative and responsible for how their initial worldview was established before analyzing what changes may or may not have occurred as a result of the study tour. The goal is not to presuppose a causal effect between international study tours and the professional development of teachers. Instead, it seeks to document how this particular study tour experience had an impact on individual participants based on his or her perceptions so that readers may draw their own conclusions as to whether any correlation exists.

### **Kelly**

Kelly was born in 1970 and has taught second grade at a rural elementary school since 1998. As one of the youngest teachers on the study tour, she said that she applied to the study tour because she was interested in traveling and learning more about Asia. Throughout the study tour, Kelly was extremely curious, outgoing, and adventurous. Despite her limited knowledge about the cultures and people of Southeast Asia, she never was afraid to ask questions about what she was seeing and experiencing. After scheduling a date and time to conduct the first interview, I met Kelly at her school one morning towards the end of November 2007.



Kelly was born and raised in a small town in Western Massachusetts where she and her family were considered quite typical, i.e. white, middle class, and Christian. Her parents both worked steady jobs and throughout her life Kelly always stayed close to home, attending college and graduate school locally, then getting teaching jobs at schools all within twenty minute drive from her childhood home. In 2001, Kelly was single and had been teaching for about five years. Today, she is married and has a two-year-old son. Her earliest memories of her childhood are of her playing outside with her sisters, picking raspberries and getting muddy in the fields that surrounded her home. The town she grew up in was relatively homogeneous and Kelly's exposure to people representing different racial and cultural backgrounds had been extremely limited throughout her childhood. When asked what her elementary school was like in terms of diversity she pauses to think before responding.

I remember this one kid, this one black kid who went to school and the kids were teasing him about the color of his skin... we really hadn't had any black kids come to our school at that time. I [also] remember talking about and knowing that there was a Jewish kid in school. In that area [there were] a lot of Catholic people and Protestant people. So, there wasn't a lot of diversity both with religion and with ethnicity, definitely not. [It] was a Polish kind of community.

Even as a college student, Kelly's interaction with people representing different racial or cultural backgrounds extended only to those students she shared classes with. After deciding to pursue an undergraduate degree in Early Childhood Development at the nearby state university, Kelly remembered her student teaching practicum at an elementary school in a nearby city.

When I was [an] undergrad, I did a little bit of work in Holyoke and that was an awakening. That was an awakening experience for me because the teacher there had thirty kids or something like that... I was only there for part of the day but the way that she treated the kids and the way that she talked to them was so

demeaning that I thought if I ever get to be like that I need to quit. So, it was a good experience [for me] so I could see kind of what not to do. But also, I saw how challenging it was [and] I think [the reason] she was that way was because there were so many kids and [from] so many different backgrounds... There were a lot of Hispanic kids, there were a lot of black kids, [and] there were a lot of white kids. I mean it was a good mixture, but the way that she treated them wasn't fair... And she talked about them in front of them in a not nice ways.

Before 2001, Kelly's travel experience consisted of a couple of short trips to Canada and England. When the information sheet about the study tour appeared on the refrigerator in the teachers' room, Kelly saw it as an opportunity to do something both educational and adventurous. Although she had had a few students from Vietnam and Cambodia in previous years, she knew relatively little about the region and its cultures.

You know, I was living in Garfield, quite sheltered, and I didn't know a lot [about the world]. When I went through school, I wasn't really interested in history [because] it never held my interest. I couldn't figure out what it meant for me and so I didn't really engage very well in history. And there wasn't a lot about Southeast Asia. I [didn't] know anything...I didn't know anything about Pol Pot or the genocide that happened there. I didn't know anything about Angkor Wat or any of that... I didn't know anything about Buddhism or any of the religions that we saw when we were there. Basically, I went knowing nothing.

Of the three countries visited during the study tour, Cambodia was the one that made the deepest and most profound impression on Kelly. As the first developing country she had ever visited, Kelly was humbled by the widespread poverty she saw throughout the country but also genuinely impressed, if not somewhat surprised, by the friendliness of the people. One of her most vivid memories was of a little girl in Cambodia who followed our group to the market. She recalled the girl had an open cut on her head and scrambled to pick up a half eaten piece of fruit that our guide had tossed to the ground.

I remember thinking of Dith (pseudonym) and how he was Cambodian and [how] he had the means to buy the fruit... it was almost like he had lived with poverty for so long that he didn't even notice the little girl standing there. It just really hit me that even there, with all these people who are starving... it was just part of their lives.

In describing this episode, Kelly seemed to reveal her surprise at Dith's indifference to the plight of the young girl. She then tried to rationalize his behavior by attempting to look at the situation from his perspective, which she concluded was a result of him being constantly exposed to such poverty that it no longer bothered him. By contrast, Kelly's experience at a school for rural poor children run by a local non-governmental office provided a more action-oriented model of how some people and organizations go about the task of tackling poverty. In visiting the school, Kelly also critically reflected on her own position of privilege as compared to the teacher whose class she was observing.

I just remember the school itself and how impoverished it was, and how, knowing that the teacher wasn't getting paid... yet she knew it was important and she was doing it anyway. And here I am with tons of books and pencils... and wanting all this stuff to make sure I can teach the kids, yet here she was teaching the children what she needed to teach them and she had nothing, you know?

The Cambodia experience clearly had a significant impact on Kelly. When pressed to explain why, she recalled the impoverished living conditions people endured, but also the enormous spirit and strength of the people who displayed great pride, generosity and kindness despite having so little in the way of material wealth.

It really made you think about what we have and what we take for granted and you realize you can be happy with very little... I remember seeing, [that] day when we were riding along the river, there were tons of Cambodian families there and it was because it was Sunday, and they were there celebrating the day off with their families and how important it was [for them].

Before her experience in Cambodia, poverty was an abstract concept for Kelly. It was something she read about or saw on TV but never saw up close and personal. While her initial reaction to the poverty she saw was to make comparisons to her own life and “understand how lucky she was,” she began to see other aspects of Cambodian life that provided another perspective on what really matters. While she doesn’t discount the importance of money, she also begins to understand that people who don’t have much in the way of material wealth have other things, such as family and friends, which made their lives rich in other meaningful ways. Moreover, she found that many of these people were kind and generous despite not having much in the way of material things.

Kelly’s more nuanced perspective of poverty seemed to become even more substantiated based on an experience that took place during her honeymoon to Cancun, Mexico a few years after the study tour. During that trip, all the guests at the resort she and her husband were staying at were evacuated to different locations inland as Hurricane Wilma approached. Stuck in an old schoolhouse for three days with very little food and water, an older local man approached the tourists and offered them sugared coffee and fresh bread, which he’d deliver later. Kelly recalled being horrified by the attitude and behavior of an American couple who first complained to the man that they preferred their coffee without sugar, and then voiced their suspicion that he had taken the bread money with no intention of delivering the bread.

I think these people took their wealth for granted. I felt like they were fairly privileged people, and they looked down on the people that were waiting on them rather than appreciate that they’re people too. I don’t think they saw them as people.

Eventually, in the midst of the waning storm, the man returned with the bread. This episode seemed to affirm Kelly's experience in Cambodia, where she learned that to assume the worst of people because they're poor is both arrogant and wrong. As she explained:

But then he did come back and it was hot, fresh, huge loaves of bread. [This was] after eating nothing but beans and tuna fish from a can... it was just amazing that this man would do this for us. And he came during more of the storm, when it was still raining and still windy; he came to us with bread and coffee during the night. It was one of those things... These people, even though they have no money [they'll] try to take care of you. And it wasn't because they wanted money from us...

Adding to Kelly's increased awareness about the dynamics of poverty and privilege in countries like Cambodia and Mexico were new perspectives on sociopolitical issues taking place in the United States. After driving through shantytowns on the outskirts of Bangkok, Kelly learned from one of the guides that most of the inhabitants were migrant workers coming from the countryside to earn better wages and send money home. By looking at their situation through the lens of an "outsider", Kelly drew an analogy to migrant workers in the United States.

The idea of earning money somewhere else and sending it to your home place, I just, I really think that it happens more than we think; and I think [as] Americans we sort of live here and work here and stay here, a lot of us do, and [we] have no idea what a Mexican person does, who comes into our country to work and they send a lot of their money back to their families who are impoverished back home. And it gives you another insight to the fact of why they want to be here... I think a lot of people look at them with contempt because [they wonder] what are they doing here in our country and why are they taking our jobs? But, they're jobs that a lot of people wouldn't take anyway.

This transference of meaning drawn from her observations in Southeast Asia and later put into the context of similar sociopolitical situations in the United States was

significant because it demonstrated how Kelly's understanding and perspective on poverty became more nuanced after she was able to see its various manifestations as an "outsider" in another country. This, in turn, provided her with the opportunity to critically reflect on a range of related issues occurring in the United States, specifically those related to immigration and transnationalism, from multiple perspectives and develop a more in-depth affective understanding of poverty in general.

When asked about how she felt about international study tours as a professional tool, Kelly thought about her mentor teacher when she was student teaching.

It would have been good for her to go to Puerto Rico and see what these people were coming from. I think it helps you to know. When I look at the Cambodian students... I think about their parents, knowing that they're my age and they probably left Cambodia because of what was happening at the time... but they have a whole background to their life that was really tough, that makes them who they are, yet we don't have any idea what that was like because we live in our little bubble; and I think that that teacher in Holyoke lived in her little bubble and didn't travel much at all, and made a lot of assumptions about why um the Hispanic people were here and what they were doing. I don't know, I just think the way she talked about the kids who were in shelters and the way she interacted wasn't [nice], it just made me think she was naïve herself, even though she thought she knew everything.

### **Jacqui**

Jacqui was born in the late 1940s in Brooklyn, NY, the oldest of three children. Before becoming a full-time teacher, she spent many years working in a variety of jobs, including teaching English as a Second Language and Basic Education at an Adult Learning Center in Lowell, Massachusetts, serving as a counselor at a small college, and marketing for Blue Cross Blue Shield. In 1995, she accepted a job teaching English as a Second Language in an urban school district in Western Massachusetts where she remains to this day. More recently, she switched to a new role as a classroom teacher in

an elementary school where she now teaches fourth grade. After getting in touch with her, I arranged to meet Jacqui at her home late one Sunday morning in the fall of 2008.

The granddaughter of Eastern European Jews who emigrated from Russia and Ukraine, Jacqui's parents were high school sweethearts in Brooklyn, where she was born and spent the first seven years of her life. When asked to describe her childhood years, Jacqui fondly recalled her earliest memories in Brooklyn surrounded by members of her immediate and extended family.

I remember every Sunday morning, we'd go to my mother's parents house [and] have lox and bagels; and they'd let me drink half coffee, half milk from a glass, you know? I just have good memories of that.

Unlike Kelly, Jacqui spent much of her childhood moving around as her father sought steady employment. First moving around Brooklyn and then to Queens, Jacqui only recently brought up the subject with her mother.

I asked my mother why we moved around so much when I was little and she said, "we couldn't pay the rent." So I guess people did that back then, if they couldn't pay the rent they just moved to the next place.

After leaving Brooklyn, Jacqui's family moved to a small town in Connecticut where she remembered feeling very out of place.

So I went from Brooklyn to living in a village... I think I remember being like that was the last move, that one broke me. Because that one was away from all my family, except my parents, and the kids that I'd gotten friendly with; and I [had] really liked the school I was at [in Brooklyn]. And I didn't like where I was. I couldn't understand. The kids belonged to 4H. I was such an outsider.

Their stint in Connecticut was a short one only lasting about a year before the family packed up again and moved to Worcester, Massachusetts. Shortly after beginning

elementary school in her new neighborhood, Jacqui recalls being teased because of her Jewish heritage.

I felt like an outsider because I got chased home from school... I killed Jesus, I didn't even know who Jesus was and I didn't kill anybody, you know? Things like that happened... People say [anti-Semitism] doesn't exist, but it [has] always existed in my life, and I don't think I'm unusual in any way. I'm unusual only that my parents were from New York where everybody was all mixed up. [They] didn't think about where they had moved to. And these kids were brought up thinking the Jews killed Christ, and there I was...

Following her graduation from high school, Jacqui went on to attend a junior college before transferring to the University of Massachusetts in 1968. Recalling that she was more caught up in the social scene rather than the political one, Jacqui remembered being advised to get her teaching credentials as a backup to her undergraduate degree in History.

So they told me you should [get] an Education teaching certificate, you know that's a great backup. They must've told every girl that at the time... So I did; and I signed up with the Education Department, which in 68 and 69 was off on some crazy thing, creative problem solving. I took the most ridiculous classes that were really not helpful to what I might end up doing at all. But you know everybody was rebelling...

After learning late in the semester that she was one class short from graduating, Jacqui eventually finished her degree when a sympathetic professor allowed her to take his course via correspondence. By that time, she had moved to Provincetown, Massachusetts and was living a "hippie" lifestyle while working in her boyfriend's leather shop. During the winters when the tourists had all left and business was slow, Jacqui would take the money she had saved and hop flights to Europe where she hitchhiked around, traveling with other "lost" kids she met on the road.



In the years that followed, Jacqui found herself in a series of jobs that usually centered on the theme of helping people. One of those jobs was at an Adult Learning Center where she taught newly arrived immigrants English as a Second Language (ESL), which she enjoyed immensely. Her travel experiences and the people she met across Europe and Morocco created within her a love of adventure and a desire to experience and learn about new cultures. Teaching English as a Second Language was a job that allowed her to pursue some of those passions closer to home. Eventually her interest turned elsewhere, however, and she returned to graduate school and earned a Master's degree in Psychology and Counseling and later found work as a college counselor at a small liberal arts school near Boston. It was during this time that Jacqui was briefly married to a Vietnam War veteran. Her restlessness notwithstanding, Jacqui again shifted gears and returned to graduate school, this time earning a Master's degree in Education with certification to teach English as a Second Language. At forty-years old, with a renewed ambition to travel, Jacqui took a job teaching English as a Second Language in Spain, which she recalled as being one of the most fun times of her life despite the fact that she couldn't speak Spanish.

In 2001, Jacqui was in her sixth year of teaching English as a Second Language in Western Massachusetts when she got word of the Southeast Asia study tour from her department chair at the middle school where she was teaching.

My husband had been a Vietnam veteran. Vietnam had a huge place in my early life [because of] the Vietnam War. I was against it at the time and I had heard all those speeches and [having] the opportunity to go there I thought was just amazing... And Thailand I didn't know anything about it [but] that was welcome to me. But it was Cambodia and Vietnam that really drove me [to apply].

Having taught refugee students from Cambodia and Vietnam English as a Second Language, Jacqui had heard the horror stories but was particularly moved during a visit to a monument dedicated to victims of the Killing Fields just outside of Siem Reap, Cambodia.

I remember going through those [killing] fields and we sat down and there was this glass case...it was filled with skulls, and you could smell it. You can hear about it and read about it all you want [but] it doesn't do what being there does. And, yes, I talked to real people that had been through that but it didn't hit me in the head like it did [being there].

Jacqui's brief marriage to a Vietnam Veteran stirred within her a desire to find out what Vietnam must have been like for him given the psychological and emotional problems he came home with. Even though she knew her visit would in no way resemble what he experienced, she thought that seeing the country might shed some light on what her ex-husband had been through. One memory that Jacqui recalled was a field trip the group took to a section of the Cu Chi Tunnels, which were an extensive network of underground tunnels used by the Viet Cong to move people and supplies during the war. In addition to seeing the elaborate tunnel system, the group was also shown the booby traps complete with hinged doors lined with sharp metal spikes used to maim and demoralize American combat soldiers. From this experience, Jacqui recalled her thoughts at the time.

It was hot [when] we were there. It was really hot and it wasn't raining like it was supposed to be. And so, there we were walking on some of those trails where our soldiers walked and [where] the Vietnamese people lived; and I was trying to imagine a soldier with forty pounds on his back and boots. And I'm wearing some little T-shirt and dripping with sweat, just dripping. You know, just wiping it away. I couldn't even imagine how they could [have] possibly been there. What a ridiculous situation. And these people, you know what? It was their home. What were we doing there?

The horror of the war was suddenly brought home in Jacqui's mind. Instead of trying to imagine what it must have been like for her husband, Jacqui was able to feel the heat and humidity that drained the energy out of soldiers, and see the implements of war used against them as they fought an unseen enemy. Although Jacqui had always been sympathetic towards her husband and the trauma he had gone through, the experience of actually being there created a much deeper empathy that had been lacking until then.

Oh the horror of it all. I just realized I could never know... No wonder why I couldn't understand my husband. He had been through [all] that. He was totally damaged by it. You know, he couldn't be intimate. He couldn't be close to anybody... It helped me understand my own marriage; why he was like the way he was, and to accept him better. And my own lacking, that I was such a kid, I was such a silly dilly, you know? And he had been through so much.

Despite the tenacity the Vietnamese displayed during the war, Jacqui was pleasantly surprised by the friendliness she encountered by ordinary people on the street. As their former enemy she expected them to be bitter and hostile towards Americans and when it became obvious that that wasn't the case, she wanted to understand why.

I remember asking different people the same question: how come you're so nice to Americans? I just don't get it. We were here, we did terrible things to you and [now] you're accepting us? I know you need our money. I know you want to do business and that Vietnam is pulling itself up; but that wasn't enough for me and the answer I got more than one time over and over was: "we fought with the Chinese for over a thousand years, we fought with the French for 20 years, we fought with you for 10 years, it's nothing, it's nothing."

While the study tour had a powerful impact on Jacqui's personal life, it also was significant to her professional development as a teacher. Perhaps more than anything it reminded her of the importance for teachers to be sensitive to the needs of students, especially those who come as newcomers and cannot speak English.

[When] I was an ESL teacher in Springfield, there was a Chinese student and [he] was in a regular class... the only non-English-speaking student. He would hide

under the desk and I would say to the teacher, “he's hearing a foreign language all day long, he doesn't understand anything.” Imagine [it]. Put yourself in his place.” Because I had been in that place... I had when I was in Spain [and] I couldn't understand [the language]... and here's this poor child; of course he has to shut it off every so often. But it has affected my teaching from then on.

When asked about her students who came to the United States as refugees fleeing war and conflict, Jacqui was more retrospective. She acknowledged that there are no easy answers on how to deal with the myriad of problems a student may have as a result of their past, especially given the limited time and resources available to teachers.

You know its unfortunate; it's not the teacher's fault if they're given students from totally different cultures and experiences, especially the war-torn areas, and given no information. You know, here's the Sudanese student, here's your Liberian student have a good time... So I think the more people that can travel and experience other cultures the better it will be. It doesn't have to be the same one as the child you're teaching; just enough to bring an awareness that people are different as much as they are the same. And also teachers should be given a little training, a little professional development if they get students that are from war-torn countries especially.

Asked how the study tour affected her, Jacqui spoke of how she often used her role as an English as a Second Language teacher to explain to other classroom teachers of immigrant and refugee youth aspects of a students' culture or traumatic past that might shed light on some of their behaviors in school.

Last year and the year before, I had students from Sudan, Somalia, Liberia, and they were certainly acting in different ways... they were like the people who had been through the Killing Fields, or Pol Pot in Cambodia, or the Vietnam War... they had experienced war, they had seen people die, they had experienced starvation, and so of course they're different and their cultures are different... I would explain to [other] teachers about their culture being so different... and to think about where they came from... I think this trip more than anything in my whole life brought that home to me and [it's] a part of my teaching whether I'm aware of it or not.

## **Lori**

Lori is a social studies teacher at a large urban high school in Western Massachusetts. She has spent her entire life in the Springfield area and has watched the city she loves change from a family-oriented collection of ethnic neighborhoods to an economically distressed urban landscape. As one of the more boisterous participants on the study tour, Lori was always good humored and fun to be around. She was the type of person to speak her mind when pressed but always did so in way that was respectful of others. After eight years without communication, I arranged to meet Lori at her home in late August 2009.

Born in the mid 1950's amongst a large extended family in Springfield, MA, Lori understood from an early age the importance of relationships and tight familial bonds. Her mother's side of the family emigrated from Italy and one of her earliest memories is of her grandparents prohibiting the children from speaking Italian in public for fear that people might recognize that their dialect represented an uneducated and therefore socially inferior class. Her memories speak largely of this generation, where family was of utmost importance in all aspects of life. They were the ones who came to America with not much more than the clothes on their back and the dream of a better life.

My grandfather loved being in Springfield. He built it. He literally built it. He was a mason and he'd [point out places] and say he did the footings on this [building], or we did this [one]; and the façade on the church, me and your Uncle Gabe did that. So it was like [his] fingerprints were everywhere.

She also recalled with a mixture of anger and sadness the gradual downturn of Springfield from a collection of tight-knit family neighborhoods to an economically

distressed cityscape with elevated interstates both literally and metaphorically splitting communities. Those early days represented the beginning of the decline of industrial cities such as Springfield as factories shuttered their doors and moved their operations overseas. In their wake, Lori recalled, the city became more decentralized and people started moving out to the suburbs. Mom and pop stores that people used to depend on went out of business as people drove their cars to large supermarkets and new shopping malls. For Lori, those changes were the first signs of globalization, although at that time the word had not become a part of the vernacular.

When [the interstate] went through, people could get to other places, so the center of the city started to die, so the opportunities for the kids started to dissipate. Now, you have kids hanging around with nothing to do. Shop owners who say we don't want kids down here. Well, you know what? In 2009 that's what they have. We have nothing downtown to draw people except bars.

Lori's childhood occurred at a time when the social fabric of America was changing in dramatic ways. The social revolution of the 1960's and the Vietnam War all were formative events in her life growing up that affected everything and everyone around her. The oldest of three daughters, Lori remembered herself as a strong-minded, almost rebellious child.

I was not one of the cute kids. I was very active and I was smart and I was strong; and I was taller than a lot of the kids, [but] I just didn't care. Everything fascinated me and I asked questions that people couldn't answer...

Her high school years were described by Lori as a time of reconciling many of her dreams and ambitions with the realities of her life. She was ambitious but became dismayed when she discovered that her career choices were limited not only because she was a woman, but also because going to the college of her choice would have been an

impossibility given her family's financial situation. At sixteen, she also faced another reality that she knew would not sit well with her family, the realization that she was a lesbian.

For the first time in my life I realized that as a young woman I couldn't be and do the things I wanted to be and do... I was really coming to terms with my identity as a person, [but] I realized that I could never have the kind of relationship that I wanted, nor could I have the kind of job I wanted.

Coming to terms with being a lesbian was far easier for her to do on her own than it was explaining to her parents. As devout Catholics, Lori's parents would subsequently banish her after she moved in with her then partner and current spouse.

For fifteen years I didn't see them. I would call every so often just to let them know that I was still alive, but they basically said "don't come home and don't tell anyone in the family where you are because we are so ashamed of you..."

It was not easy for Lori to talk about this time of her life. Even after all the years that have passed, she still seemed uncomfortable and on edge. When asked about what it was like having to come to terms with her identity at a time when coming out was especially taboo, Lori seemed somewhat put off by the question. She remarked that she doesn't understand people's preoccupation with associating one's sexuality with their identity, especially when it seems so irrelevant in the larger scheme of things.

As far I'm concerned, the least important thing about me is my sexuality, truly. I don't even care about my own sex life and I [could] care less about other people's, you know? It's just such a non-issue for most people. It just never made such sense to me that other people would have to have their own church, [or] have their own restaurants... It's like self-segregation. I'm a grown up, I live here and I just want my rights... I want to be able to live the way I want to live, you know?

Yet as a social studies teacher, Lori is struck by the irony of teaching about a country founded on the ideals of life, liberty and happiness despite the fact that she and her partner are still denied certain civil rights.

I'm married in Massachusetts but it's not recognized anywhere else in the nation. And I teach the very core values of what this nation is all about, and they don't recognize me or give me federal rights. So yeah, these are things that are close and near and dear to me... We give citizens rights. We give non-citizens the rights of citizens. So why are we limiting which citizens can have federal rights and which ones can't? It's not based on color anymore. We can't do that. But we can do it [based] on sexuality and we can do it [based] on physical ability.

Lori's interest in history and the social sciences seemed especially ensconced in her experiences feeling like an "outsider" growing up. Her passion for teaching was based largely on the desire to create learning conditions that facilitated critical thinking and thus spurred students to see the need for social change. Of her students, she said she doesn't want a herd of sheep, but rather "a pack of wolves." Furthermore, according to Lori, what is written in history books isn't necessarily the truth, nor is it factual as it is the victors who always end up writing them. Instead, she said, history must be understood through the lens of multiple, sometimes disparate, perspectives that cannot be neatly packaged or interpreted.

I can't always and don't think I should make [history] easy. I don't think I should interpret everything. But I think I should present it the best way I can and help the critical thinking [process]... Without a sense of history everything is [just] current events, it's ephemeral.

For Lori, the Southeast Asia study tour was her second opportunity in as many years to see a part of the world that was undergoing rapid changes due to unprecedented development. The previous year, she participated on a study tour to China, where she was able to observe the effects of globalization and modernization from an "outsider"



perspective and critically reflect on the similarities she saw in comparison to what had happened in the United States in previous decades.

China really was trying to impress the world for the Olympics. At that time, [Beijing] was a contender so we were seeing massive destruction of the city, of the old ways, of the cramped tiny neighborhoods. And later, I came to realize that those were family homes, you know? They were really family compounds with intergenerational families supporting themselves. And that was what was happening in America in the 50s. [It was] the destruction of the extended family to [make way for] the suburban nuclear family. And it failed here. Now we're going to watch it there.

Lori's decision to apply to the Southeast Asia study tour in many ways was an extension of her desire to further explore the causes and effects of globalization, this time in another rapidly developing region. However, her experiences in Southeast Asia, Cambodia in particular, were profoundly different. Instead of seeing the destruction of the old to make way for the new as she saw in China, Cambodia seemed stuck in a time warp as it struggled to recover from decades of war and the untold suffering of millions of its people. It also was the first time she came into direct contact with people living in abject poverty, and as it had for other members of the study tour group the experience humbled her. As was the case with Kelly, Lori was also struck by the gentleness of the Cambodian people who still retained a sense of pride and dignity despite their living conditions.

There was a woman who came up to me; she was a very elderly, thin looking woman with a bowl [for] begging. And she had about three teeth and two little [children] with her. And I had no small bills. I had a five-dollar bill in my pocket so I just gave [it to] her because I would give her what I had. And she kissed my hand. And I was stabbed through the heart. I wish had more money to give. She humbled me so. That really changed me because I've lost more money than that on occasion and not given it a thought. So giving that five dollars away changed me more than the five dollars did in helping her family because the generosity of spirit from her was greater than the monetary generosity I had [given her]. That

really changed me; that you can retain your dignity and in fact become exemplary while begging was for me... it was profound.

Of the study tour experience, Lori was retrospective. The opportunity to travel and see firsthand how other people live was an invaluable experience for her as difficult and trying as parts of it were.

It was just overwhelming. It was sensory overload... I was also emotionally open at that time too. All the barriers were gone. The barriers were gone with the people I was visiting and the people I was traveling with. Because by this time we had shared so much and we were becoming closer friends through our travels. But again you have to open yourself to the world and let it hurt you sometimes and let it lift you and go with that.

Lori believed that the Southeast Asia study tour changed her. Her partner, who joined us towards the end of the interview, agreed saying Lori came back “more insightful, more retrospective, more aware and sensitive to things... in some ways [with] a new zest for life.” Lori, for her part, agreed.

You had to be open, you really have to let down your guard and let that change you, and then embrace the change. I did come back very different and it has changed the way I approach and relate to people and things, and teaching and traveling.

As to the impact of the study tour on her teaching, she emphasized her desire to open the minds of her students to look at world more critically and to understand their role in making it a better place to live. Her experiences in China and Southeast Asia have allowed her to understand to a much greater extent how interconnected the world is and how people everywhere are as much the same as they are different. Her teaching now includes many more examples of life in other cultures using the artifacts she brought

home. She likes to use pictures, some clear and some blurred on purpose because she says, it allows students to make a connection on there own.

There are some images I want kids to get a feeling for, [and] some images I want them to see quite clearly. I have a photo of barbed wire with a perfectly clear blue sky. They can see that one clearly. The picture of the cell, where people died, which is distorted, unclear and fuzzy, because it's my intention. I don't want it to be crystal clear so they say, "Oh, those are blood stains," [or] "That ammunition box was his bathroom." I don't want it to be that easy or that clear. I want that feeling to come through because then they can say, "oh, that was like in Auschwitz because they've already read Elie Wiesel's, "Night." And they make that connection themselves.

### **Jen**

Jen is a middle school Art teacher in a small city in Western Massachusetts where she was born and raised. She was an unlikely participant on the study tour given her proclivity for the familiar and seeming lack of adventurous spirit having only traveled to the United Kingdom when she was a college student. Moreover, she was apprehensive about trying new foods and limited her diet almost entirely to chicken and rice throughout the duration of the study tour. Although traveling to Southeast Asia would be her first time traveling to a developing part of the world, she recalls being tremendously excited when she heard that she had been accepted into the program, particularly because she knew the opportunity might never come up again. After dropping in on her classroom during a visit to her school in the spring of 2009, I arranged to meet her later that summer.

Jen was born in raised in a small city; some might call it a large town, in Western Massachusetts known today for its artsy, somewhat cosmopolitan but still small-town feel. It's home to a prestigious liberal arts college for women. For Jen, the city today is

vastly different than the one she grew up in. Over the years, the city has become more culturally diverse due to its proximity to both New York City and Boston, as well as because of its reputation as a liberal, family-oriented place to live. One result of the influx of new people is the schism that formed between residents based on whether you were a native or a transplant, which was based not only on length of residency, but also of social class. According to Jen, the city is now “earthy crunchy.” You can tell where a person comes from by how they refer to the city, with old timers and locals referring to the city using one nickname, and the “politically correct” newcomers and “outsiders” referring to the city using another nickname. Growing up in the 1950’s and 1960’s, Jen remembered a different feel. The city was more of a tight knit community.

I grew up off of Birch Street, right [near the college]... So we could ride our bikes, we would ride all the side streets, down right through the campus, down to [the] library downtown. We just rode our bikes everywhere. It was just great. It was a wonderful place to grow up in back then. And we walked to my junior high downtown, which is now the Center for the Arts...that's where I went to junior high... And my father worked in a house just behind there in the basement. He ground eyeglasses before he became an optician. So I would go in and see him after school and say ‘hi’ and then walk home. It was what you would think of a typical little college community, you know? Like close-knit.

Back in the early days when Jen was growing up, the city she lived in lacked much of the racial and cultural diversity that today gives it a more “cosmopolitan” feel. The conservatism of the times also made it somewhat taboo to divorce and raise a child as a single parent, although that was starting to change. Of those times, Jen remembered a single black mother from their church asking her father if he could take her son to the annual father/son football banquet, to which he agreed. The next two years, a single white mother asked the same favor of him for each of her sons.

My father was a huge influence on me as far as that goes, because there was no race with him. I mean everybody was [the same], you know? His boys were his boys. He didn't have any [of his own] boys but those were his boys.

The younger of two daughters, Jen recalled being a very quiet child who was never particularly studious, even though her mother perceived her as being the smarter of her two children. In high school, Jen's social interactions were among a small group of marching band friends where she self identified as a "band geek." Her decision to continue on to college to pursue a teaching career were due primarily to her mother's insistence.

So when I went to high school I was told I was going to be taking the college [prep] courses... [When I suggested that I only take two years of college and then get an office job] my mother told me "Well, I'm paying for Westfield State. Either no college or you go to Westfield State and become a teacher..." And I had thought about becoming a teacher, it wasn't like my mother said this is the only thing you're capable of doing, but I didn't know what else that I wanted to do, but I knew that [teaching] was a possibility

Despite her initial ambiguity about whether she would be able to finish a four-year degree, Jen quickly discovered that she enjoyed her classes and soon developed an affinity for pottery. She also discovered that she was very much a nurturing person and, as the only one with a car in her circle of friends, she found herself ferrying them to bars on Thursday evenings and then returning late at night to pick them up.

I was like the mother hen, I would go and bring them and drop them off and then wait to make sure they all got back home, back to the dorm before I could go to sleep.

After graduating with a degree in Elementary Education with a minor in Art, Jen started her career as an elementary school teacher before eventually becoming certified as a middle school art teacher. In the early 1980's, when she was teaching at an elementary

school, Jen remembered the sudden influx of students from Cambodia and the story of one girl in particular.

And [my student] talked about it... she drew a picture of her village and we talked about her family escaping through the fields, and her uncle telling her “no matter what you do don't stop... don't look back just keep going.” She was telling us this in class... And only a few of them made it.

Trying to imagine where these students came from and what they went through to get to the United States was one of the central reasons why Jen decided to apply to the study tour, and she wrote about her past students on her application. When she was told that she had been selected she was overjoyed. When asked which country was her favorite, Jen paused before answering:

I don't know. Not Vietnam. Well Vietnam is the one I remember the most, because it was the most uncomfortable. To me that was the one where, you know, I always felt like we were being watched.

As with others in the group, Jen had a deep ambivalence towards Vietnam dating back to the Vietnam War. Because the study tour had been sponsored by the United States Department of Education, the group was assigned an official minder from the Vietnamese government who accompanied the group on all field trips, at one point abruptly cancelling a previously scheduled field trip to a shoe factory at the last minute. Clearly, many study tour participants were unsettled by the fact that we were being monitored so closely. Though Vietnam was the most memorable country of the study tour for Jen, it was only because she remembered feeling quite uncomfortable there, commenting that she felt like she was always being watched. She also got the distinct impression that the Vietnamese people she came in contact with didn't like Americans.

When I came back [from Vietnam], I said, “They’re still pissed. They don’t like us. They don’t like us and they probably never will.” You know, there’s a real division [over] there, still to this day.

When asked why she thought there was still animosity towards Americans as a result of the war, Jen compared the Vietnamese to Southerners in the United States.

I’m sure there’s people in the south that still think about the Civil War, you know, in certain ways or whatever that we don’t even [think about]... you know?

She also was bothered by the fact that she was in a country once considered the enemy of the United States; and people she knew who had fought in the Vietnam War had been both physically and psychologically scarred by that experience.

I felt guilty. I felt bad because one of the guys that my father [took to the football banquet], you know, one of his boys [went] to Vietnam. When he came home, he started up his life again like he had never skipped a beat. He never talked about it... And it was like he just locked it right up; wouldn’t talk about it, nothing. And I couldn’t understand that.

When asked whether the trip had helped her better understand the experiences of Vietnam veterans like the guy her father took to the football banquet, Jen responded:

At least I knew the conditions, what it was like, you know? So [Vietnam] was where I felt the most uncomfortable but yet it opened my mind a bit more... because what you read in the papers is not what’s there.

Jen’s memories of Cambodia were similar to those of many of the other teachers in the group. She was saddened by the poverty, horrified by the atrocities committed during the genocide, yet uplifted by the kind and gentle spirit of the people. Her visit to the Tuol Sleng Detention Center in Phnom Pehn, Cambodia was a particularly moving experience given the horror stories she had heard from her former students. Kept largely intact since the Vietnamese overthrew the Khmer Rouge, the museum displays the

photographs of the thousands of people, including many children, who were systematically tortured and executed on its grounds. For Jen, the stories were almost too horrific to imagine. Seeing the old school that had been converted to a torture center with the gallows and pictures of horrified men, women and children was almost more than Jen could bear. Even though eight years had passed, she still had difficulty describing how felt when she was there.

I had never, ever imagined anything like that before. I'd never seen pictures... You know when they say a genocide it was just a... whatever, I don't know. I guess that just wasn't a part of my world, you know? So, to be there and to [see it], you know? Still, when I look at those pictures I go "oh my god." [It] was just horrific.

The poverty she saw in Cambodia was also deeply troubling to Jen. In considering the enormous gap in wealth between an average American and an average Cambodian, Jen reflected on just how big the disparity was.

The poverty was just you know mind-boggling; that people generation after generation... that's the way they live... I thought what a wasteful country we are. I mean [they] could live off what we throw away.

Of her actual experience in Southeast Asia, Jen recalled feeling overwhelmed while there and needing more time to make sense of what she saw after returning. When asked about the significance of the study tour on her personal and professional life, Jen has mixed feelings. On one hand, she admitted to having been changed by the experience

Oh of course it did, absolutely. It changed my way of thinking, this whole thought process about what these people suffered. What they went through, what they still live in. You know [people] talk about third world countries and how they [live]. [Compared to] what we have, I mean it's just incredible.



On the other hand, she also admitted the resource material she brought back hasn't been fully utilized because Southeast Asia wasn't a formal part of her curriculum. The resource materials she brought back occasionally get used when she needs to illustrate the artistic style of a particular culture, but other than that she isn't quite sure how the experience has affected her teaching.

I still teach the same... yeah, maybe [I'm more] sympathetic... I don't think I've changed my teaching style other than going [to my students], "you know, you guys have it pretty good, pretty damn good (laughs)." But they don't want to hear that. They really don't want to hear me talk about it.

She also recognized that the experience has changed her in ways that are difficult for her to articulate.

I think personally it affected me. It still does because I still think about it. I still think about it when I'm dealing with some of the kids that I know go home and get beat up, or go home to nothing, or whatever.... I think I keep it internally though, you know? I don't know how I really would let it out, but I know it's embedded. It's never going to leave my brain. [For me] in a sense, it was a life changing experience because you just have no idea what [life] is like; and so [the study tour] was an opportunity to learn how other people do.

### **Zora**

Zora is a high school social studies teacher in an urban area of Western Massachusetts. An avid traveler, Zora has visited numerous countries around the world and occasionally organizes overseas field trips for students at her school where she has taught for thirty-one years. After finding her phone number on an old information sheet, I called her and made arrangements to meet her in a café towards the end of August 2009.

The daughter of parents she describes as traveling gypsies, Zora was born and raised in New England, but spent much of her childhood following her parents as they

embarked on a series of adventures around the world. One of her earliest memories took place when she was three-years old and her parents decided to take a road trip.

They packed me up in the back seat of a beat-up Chevy and drove to Mexico from Connecticut where we lived, which was unheard of in those days. [We took] all back roads, dirt roads... So I was introduced to many cultures early on in life.

Not long afterwards, Zora's mother, who was studying Spanish at the University of Connecticut, decided to complete a semester abroad in Puerto Rico. With her younger brother in tow, Zora, who was around seven years old, remembered being put in a Puerto Rican school where nobody spoke English.

It was terrifying because we didn't know [Spanish]. And [the teachers] get frustrated when you don't speak the language, so they put you with a little primer book and hopefully you try to learn on your own but it's hard.

Returning to Connecticut after just under a year in Puerto Rico, Zora's mother returned to her studies at the University of Connecticut, at one point befriending a wealthy classmate from Colombia whose parents were so grateful that an American family had taken in their son that they invited Zora's parents to come visit.

[My parents] went [to Colombia] and fell over the country. [They] were so totally impressed with the people and the culture that they bought a place in Rodedero, which is on the coast not too far from Cartagena. And this was how many years ago? Must've been easily over 40 years ago. And we would go almost every year.

It wasn't until after she graduated from college and earned her Masters in Business Administration that Zora decided to pursue a career in teaching. After becoming discouraged by the rampant sexism that took place at the brokerage firm where she worked, Zora went back to school and got certified as a social studies teacher. When

asked about her teacher education courses, Zora related that she didn't feel adequately prepared for the realities of teaching.

I was terrified when I started teaching because I wasn't prepared. I mean I had the book knowledge of what you're supposed to do but it was different than standing in front of the kids. Thinking on your feet quickly is what we didn't get prepared for. That took years... But then the other half of it is the skills that you need for discipline, multitasking, the secretarial aspect of it, they don't tell you that when you go into the courses for certification. It just seems like all you have to do is take the courses and then you'll be all prepared. It's an incredibly multifaceted discipline. It's just unbelievable and until you actually face the classroom you don't realize that. And I think if they prepared you on many levels it would be easier. I mean even just the amount of paperwork for legal reasons; we didn't get any preparation for that. It was like being thrown to the lions.

In 2001, when Zora applied for the Southeast Asia study tour, she had just turned fifty-years old and had already been to Cuba and China that very same year. Having traveled extensively, Southeast Asia didn't seem to have as powerful an effect on Zora as it had for other less-traveled teachers on the study tour. For her, the poverty in Cambodia was similar to what she had seen in other countries she had visited.

The poverty is really bad in parts of Colombia. So [Cambodia] wasn't a shock to me in that respect. I mean I had been used to Third World countries a lot. Even in Mexico forty years ago it was a lot different.

Throughout the interview, I was intrigued by Zora's tendency to compare and contrast the people and cultures of the countries she has visited. One term she frequently used was the word, "enterprising," which she used to describe people who are business savvy, almost to the point that they are aggressive in their attempts to get your money.

Colombians have been given so little by the government to help them that they really are very enterprising and sometimes that goes beyond the honorable way of doing things. They can be the quickest thieves you've ever known and would steal from you in a heartbeat; and I noticed in Thailand in particular, they might be poor people but I never got a sense of being in danger because people would steal from you. I never felt threatened that somebody would point a gun at me

and ask for my watch, whereas in Colombia we go without any jewelry or anything. We're very low-key, [always] trying to blend in. You never go, "I'm an American." So I noticed that right off the bat.

Her experience with the Vietnamese people she met on the street, however, was more similar her experiences in Colombia.

[The Vietnamese] were a little bit more in your face, enterprising and shrewd... you know, a little boy came up to us and I was with Lori and he was selling books and it was like, "you give me some money and I'll talk to you." I never felt that in Thailand. I never got that sense of enterprising. And again, it must be because these kids had to. Their parents would send them out at twelve years old with a little stack of things to sell and told him they had to do it. It was a little more like Columbia, you know?

When asked how the study tour affected her professional development as a teacher, Zora pointed to the resource materials that she brought back, including over eight hours of video she took that she uses primarily in her Sociology class to demonstrate how people in other cultures live.

[The video] gives [my students] a bigger picture. For an American to say everybody lives like this and eats like this is so... it's not the reality and they need to see what the reality is.

She also spoke at length about the how the study tour and her other travel experiences have played an important role in how she interacts with students on both a personal and professional level.

[The study tour] has just further broadened my perspective of what it means to have different cultural views and why people are the way they are; and that is the core of my teaching: to respect that, to show what it is, and to have kids learn it. Because... I think it makes humans more tolerant, and that's what we want in the world. We want to increase tolerance of other cultures, not change them, not demean them; and to say, "look, this is how they dress over there, and this is the reason why." We have to accept that; and if everybody did that [the world] would be a much better place to live.

Asked as to whether she thought most of the other teachers she's worked with are as open to diversity and multiculturalism as she is, Zora responded:

I think they have a smaller worldview... because when you travel more you get a bigger picture; and I think one thing I can say about what this trip did [for me] was anytime I get a student from either Thailand or Cambodia or Vietnam, and I show a picture from Vietnam or say a word to them in Vietnamese, immediately I can just see a glow. Whereas a teacher who has never been exposed to the culture wouldn't know anything, so you lose that one little thread of contact with that student and that's important because in order to teach you've got to get the kid invested in you first.

She went on to discuss her impression of how some of her colleagues don't seem as understanding or empathetic towards students from diverse cultural backgrounds based on the stereotypes they sometimes use.

A lot of times [teachers] have erroneous views given to them by some prejudiced somebody else. I mean [the mistake] is pre-judging somebody; you've got to see firsthand what people are like before you can make that assessment. It's important. I mean that's why the world is in such a mess, I think, because everybody's got their own little view of how it's supposed to be. We've got to share and shoulder the burden together

She also spoke of the importance of creating relationships with students, especially those who are from other countries.

But you always have to look for something to create a relationship. I think teaching is relationships, it really is. And once you get a child interested in you as a person and can trust you then you've got something. So that's where the trip helped me the most, is to just give me another avenue to get to a child.

When I asked Zora if she thought teacher education programs should include intercultural experiences as part of the curriculum she nodded in agreement and lamented the fact that state and federal agencies don't do more to support such initiatives.

That should be something that is required because let's face it especially in urban areas you've got a diverse population, you need to appreciate the diversity because if you don't, I don't know, I just don't think you'd be as effective a teacher.

Although her travels around the world have exposed her to new cultures and new ways of knowing and doing, it also seemed that her childhood experience in Puerto Rico also played a large part in the development of her empathetic disposition.

I can see how people feel today when they come from say Puerto Rico. They don't speak English and they're put in a classroom, like the total immersion [ones] and they are just frustrated, they feel humiliated because [they] feel like [they're] not so smart. And that's not the case. [They] just don't have the language skills. And sometimes, I guess, through no fault of their own the teachers almost make [them] feel that [they're] not so smart. Like why aren't you getting this? Because at seven years old, for one thing, your own language skills are not quite developed; and then to speak another language is extremely frustrating. And when they get upset with you and say "go to the corner and read this little book," you're like "gee, I'm stupid." So, those things stayed with me in terms of what it feels like. So, when I encounter students who don't speak English as their first language, I remember a lot and I try not to stigmatize them. Because that has an impact. And a lot of teachers who have never known what it felt like won't know that. They would just say, "Okay, you don't get the language so go over there," and meanwhile the child is feeling all kinds of [negative] emotions, regrettably so.

### **Study Tour Participants who have Retired or Moved to other Careers**

This section introduces the three participants who have since retired or moved on to other careers. Although complete interviews were conducted with these retired teachers, profiles will be less detailed than those in the previous section concentrating instead on how the study tour impacted them both personally and professionally.

## **Stan**

Although Stan left his job as a Social Studies teacher at a local high school shortly after the conclusion of the study tour, he still remains active in local politics and is an elected member of the school committee in the town where he lives. After exchanging a few e-mails, I arranged to meet him at a café in the fall of 2009.

The only male teacher of the study tour, Stan expressed the most frustration with the activities and group dynamics of the study tour. He was disappointed by the isolation he perceived as the only male and wrote about it in his post-trip assessment:

Traveling alone in a group is not an experience that I find rewarding or one that I will soon repeat. The difficulty in attempting to establish/negotiate relationships with people who had already engaged in establishing some “natural” connections made this and several other stages of the trip quite challenging. And it required what I felt was unnecessary energy, both physical and emotional.

Yet there seemed to be other personal issues he seemed to be confronting, issues that he alluded to but never discussed in detail with other members of the group during the course of the tour. One of them, and perhaps the most telling, was his decision to seek conscientious objector (CO) status during the Vietnam War. Many in the group were ambivalent about approaching Stan, not only because they didn’t know him very well, but also because they were unsure how to approach such a potentially sensitive and emotional topic with someone who didn’t seem all that receptive or open at the time. This, in retrospect, may have contributed to his feeling of isolation at a time when what he needed most of all was someone to talk to.

Born in an affluent college town in Connecticut, Stan came of age in the 1960’s and 1970’s in the midst of the social revolution and Vietnam War. The son of working class parents, Stan characterized his early life as somewhat of an “outsider.”

The high school I went to... you have to imagine a place not at all unlike [Ithaca] where there is a very profound town gown split. And I was a townie; I wasn't a gownie. But yet the gownies, if you will, the university offspring, pretty much set the tone of the high school. And so, those of us who didn't run in that clique were a smaller group and very much isolated.

It wasn't that he didn't respect the working class ethos as much as he hated the limitations he perceived others put upon him based on his social class status.

This is probably a good piece of evidence that I carry around a chip on my shoulder as anything... I was told by my guidance counselor not to apply to certain schools because I wasn't good enough to either get in or to stay in. I was pretty much told by my guidance counselor, "You should apply to the B-list as opposed to the A-list." I said, "Screw that." I'm going to apply to the A-list.

The result of being stigmatized by such negative perceptions made him want to succeed even more, if not for his own future than at least to prove his detractors wrong.

It compelled me to want to succeed academically... I wanted to prove to the people who weren't letting me in that I could do it. So, it was a real challenge. The consequence of that was that I turned my back on my [working class] background.

After making dean's list his first semester and keeping a grade point average of "about a three," Stan graduated from the University of Connecticut and went on to graduate school in Massachusetts. He had recently married when he received his draft notice but was reluctant to go for a variety of reasons.

I didn't feel like shooting at anyone and I didn't feel like getting shot at, especially about something that I wasn't quite sure about...

Stan decided to file for Conscientious Objector (CO) status and while his case was making its way up through the various local and state boards, he reported for his physical and was finally taken to a small room and asked to fill out a form about whether



he had ever been a member of certain organizations, including the Abraham Lincoln Brigade and the American Communist Party.

So, I just refused to sign it, refused to fill it out. And once you do that immediately red flags go up, so you get a little sticker on your file... They weren't too happy with that, but I could do that. I wasn't breaking the laws, but as far as they were concerned it was akin to being insubordinate... Finally the State Board, the Appeals Court looked at my application, [and] they just said “forget it, we're not going to give you your CO, we're not going to give you the satisfaction of a CO. We don't want you.” So they gave me some classification... and I got out. But all the while my interest in Vietnam and my guilt was pretty profound.

The relief he felt from avoiding being sent to Vietnam was tempered by what continues to be feelings of guilt and cowardice, a term he used several times during the interview.

You can't let go of the socialization, the male socialization of society. It's really tough. I think it's easier now than I was when I was growing up. There was still this notion that in my brain that it's a male thing to do, to go. That's pretty damn strong. It's unbelievably strong. I mean think about it, I'm sixty-two years old and I'm still dealing with it.

After dropping out of graduate school, Stan found a job teaching Social Studies at a high school and proposed to teach a course about Southeast Asia and the Vietnam War to his department. This would be, as he put it, “my attempt at payback.”

I was going to do the best I could to teach a generation, another generation about the War in honor of those guys that were never going to come back. Kind of a way of easing my conscience.

By the time he applied to the Southeast Asia study tour, Stan was close to retiring from a teaching career that spanned nearly thirty-years. He admitted that his interest in the study tour had more to do with his own personal history rather than any professional goals.

I saw going to Vietnam as kind of taking a risk, a good risk. I wanted to see what I could learn about myself. It had nothing to do with teaching. It was an opportunity for me to go and that's all it was.

Despite this rather candid admission, Stan's contribution to the study tour came mostly in the form of his observation of the negative effects of globalism, specifically the ethics of tourism in developing countries such as Cambodia.

One of the things that has struck me profoundly is the enormous gulf between the United States [and developing countries]... I always had that intellectual image but to really see it [in Cambodia]... It's just incredible.

Reflecting on the disparity of wealth, Stan wondered aloud during a group meeting in Cambodia about how the subject of tourism and ethics should be approached with students.

One of the things that bothers me about this trip is the tourism angle of it. Please don't take that disrespectfully... But it's coming to grips with interacting with another part of the world as a tourist and as an exploiter of that culture and society. I mean that's what we are. I mean even when we say we're taking things back as educators we're really exploiting the area, frankly. And again, I'm wondering about the ethics of including that as part of what we talk about with kids. (From transcript of group debriefing in Siem Reap, Cambodia, 2001)

As to the value of study tours with regard to professional development, Stan seemed somewhat ambivalent, remarking at one point, "I've never been satisfied with what I've been able to take from any of those trips and incorporate them into a course." Instead, he suggested what might have been more useful would have been to come home and organize a trip back so his students could experience Southeast Asia for themselves.

Having been introduced to the experience of world travel relatively late in life, Stan participated in numerous study tours prior to Southeast Asia, including three to Japan and one to China. In addition, he has traveled extensively through Europe.

Although he is skeptical as to the direct value of study tours on his teaching per se, he seemed to recognize that travel in general has benefits that can expand one's worldview and notions of other cultures and people.

All of my [travel] experiences have opened up the world to me and made me aware that there are people out there who are similar and different to me. It's important to know that... One of the things that we used to teach kids was that... to dehumanize people and pretend they have no humanity; they bear no likeness to you. [That way] it's much easier to oppress them. That's pretty basic. And so what world travel does, I think, is open up your eyes, your heart, your mind to the fact that humanity is all over the place.

For Stan, the meaning he has made from his study tour experiences is that it is important to contribute to causes that he has some expertise in. For him, seeing the world and the conditions under which people live should “spur you into action,” as he put it.

I think any time you have an opportunity to have your eyes and your mind opened up, like in this particular case, hopefully you'll become politically active... you're something more than just a bystander... It comes down to being politically active in some area where you feel you can make a difference.

### **Lynn**

Lynn, a retired middle school teacher, taught Social Studies and developed an acute fascination of Southeast Asia during the 2001 study tour, which was her first visit to Asia. Although she retired a few years following the study tour, she has remained active in the field of Education through her involvement in several organizations that promote cross-cultural ties to East and Southeast Asia for K-12 teachers. Through this mostly volunteer work, she has conducted seminars, presented at conferences, and helped organize several professional development study tours to East and Southeast Asia. After finding her e-mail address, I arranged to meet Lynn at a Thai restaurant in the fall of 2009.

A self-described “Air Force brat,” Lynn spent her childhood years attending a variety of schools based on where her father was stationed.

My father was in the Air Force and I'm sure that's why I love to travel, because we never sat still. We traveled everywhere. Every three years he had another assignment, so that's where [my love of travel] and the desire to experience other cultures [comes from]... I'm sure that's where it comes from.

The oldest of five children, Lynn attended mostly schools on military bases, although in Bermuda she attended a British school from first to fifth grade. In an e-mail sent shortly after the study tour, Lynn described her upbringing:

While I did not always live with my family because they moved about so much, I was definitely a military child and learned from an early age that what America did was right, etc. I was a soldier's child. I took orders without being asked to think, as most military children did (personal communication, October 25, 2001).

There were also several occasions when she was sent to live her grandparents who were immigrants from Ukraine. Of these times, she remembers the tight-knit Ukrainian community, who mostly kept among themselves and was, according to Lynn, distrustful of others, deeply religious, and very anti-Communist. In high school, she vividly remembered the Cuban Missile Crisis, the assassination of President Kennedy, and the Vietnam War. The war played a profound role in her life during that period. Although her father wasn't sent to Vietnam, Lynn spoke of the memories of friends and relatives that went and never came back, as well as those who were conscientious objectors and moved to Canada, many of whom she notes still remain there. She was, at the time of the study tour, conflicted about the country that had caused so much pain and anxiety.

Vietnam was in my mind the place of the enemy (the enemy of the military father, the Communist enemy of the grandparents, the enemy who took my friends and relatives). Yet, I became an educated person who realized over the years, that

there must have been innocent people there just like everywhere else in the world. (personal communication, October 25, 2001).

Despite her deep ambivalence about Vietnam, Lynn was very excited about the prospect of participating on the study tour. Over the years, she noticed more students from Cambodia and Vietnam enrolling in her school and she was intrigued by the opportunity to see for the first time the countries she had heard so much about. In describing her study tour experience, Lynn was struck by the diversity of Southeast Asia, writing in a post-trip assessment:

I am embarrassed to admit that while I know there are differences among Southeast Asian populations, I really did not know or have any inkling how different these countries and populations are. I could not recognize one group amongst another (and still find it difficult) but my experiences here have opened new chapters for me (post-trip assessment, July, 2001).

Among the differences she noticed, Lynn was struck by friendliness of the Thai's and gentleness of the Cambodians despite their violent and traumatic past. While the poverty she saw in Cambodia troubled her, it wasn't her first experience seeing such conditions having also travelled to Haiti and the Dominican Republic. Her visit to Vietnam, however, which at that time was her first one, seemed to confirm her suspicions and fears. In an e-mail written shortly after our return home, she wrote:

Immediately, Vietnam felt very different to me from our other visits. I did not feel from the start that what we were seeing and experiencing was what was really happening. There was an obvious front. Also, I had the feeling of being observed. I felt angry there, but also very sad. I did not want to buy anything. I did not want to be there as I felt like I was almost on display, like they were still gloating that they had won. I could not reconcile myself to seeing the innocents. I felt like they were using us. It was not at all comfortable (personal communication, October 25, 2001).

During the 2009 interview, Lynn was retrospective of her first experience in Vietnam. She had since travelled back to Vietnam and Cambodia with another group of teachers, this time visiting Hanoi and the northern part of the country, and came away with a completely different impression than she had in 2001.

[During the first visit] the war was still foremost in their minds. When we arrived we were Americans. [But] it wasn't that way the second time, not at all. Even in Hanoi, I mean it was just incredible, everyone was very friendly, very open, very inquisitive, willing to [talk]... We had much more, I want to say we had more freedom on the trip to do what we wanted to do in our spare time and I felt comfortable no matter where we were... And I think it's because I went from the north to the south and many more opportunities were available to visit cultural locations, visit the people.

As an “official” group funded by an agency of the United States Department of Education, Lynn’s first experience in Vietnam was dampened by the fact that all group activities had to be approved by the Vietnamese government in advance, and the group had to be accompanied by a minder during all field trips. For many of the teachers this level of scrutiny seemed intrusive and uncomfortable such that it became a common theme in the interviews with most, if not all, of the participants. Lynn’s second visit to Vietnam, however, was privately funded and had a completely different feel to it.

Another change Lynn noticed during her subsequent visit to Cambodia was the rapid development of the tourist infrastructure in Cambodia, particularly in Siem Reap, which is the gateway to the famed temples of Angkor. In 2001, Siem Reap was in the very beginning stages of development. While new hotels were just starting to go up, the outdoor markets and the unpaved roads still gave it a village type of ambiance. In contrast, when she returned in 2007, Lynn was struck by number of new resort hotels, golf courses and other tourist amenities that had sprung up. She also noticed that many of

the vendors at the market were not the “native” people she saw in 2001, but looked and spoke Chinese.

When asked how these study tour experiences affected her teaching following the first study tour, Lynn mentioned that the curriculum frameworks made it difficult to create whole lesson plans on a specific region or culture. Instead, she integrated aspects of her cultural experiences into her lessons as a way to make them more inclusive of other cultures. Another significant difference she noticed had to do with the cultural connections she was able to make with students and parents because of her travels. Those connections, she said, made parents from places like Cambodia or Vietnam less apprehensive about approaching her despite their limited English proficiency. Many of these students would also bring her spring rolls on occasion and other ethnic treats during holidays.

Once you've read the history of that country and you see the land, it's so much easier to connect [with students and parents]. And I think it changed many students' attitudes towards me as a social studies teacher.

For Lynn, the 2001 study tour opened up a new avenue of interest that has allowed her to continue on in the field of Education even though she officially retired in 2004. Inspired by her experiences, Lynn continues to facilitate the professional development of teachers by exposing them to aspects of East and Southeast Asian cultures.

I think I've learned to have a respect, but more than a respect, more an interest or fascination for other cultures or other ways of living. So in terms of an impact let's just say that the study tour re-energized my desire to learn more... So, that's what the study tour did for me. It certainly opened my eyes to parts of the world that I had only seen pictures and read about, and it gave me a deeper appreciation of other ways of living. The fact that other people get along with so little is a good reminder. A good slap in the face, you know, to Americans, to our culture of

having everything... Did [the experience] change my lifestyle? In a way. Did it change my teaching? Yes.

### **Alice**

Alice, a middle school Science teacher, retired a few years after the Southeast Asia study tour after a twenty-eight year teaching career at the same school. As a volunteer to several community organizations, Alice has maintained strong bonds with the local Cambodian community as well as with other local advocacy groups. Because we live relatively close to each other, I have kept in touch with Alice since the conclusion of the study tour and conducted my first formal interview with her in the fall of 2007. More recently, I conducted a second interview with Alice that took place in December of 2009.

Born during World War II, Alice grew up in an urban area of Western Massachusetts that was home to a diverse group of immigrant communities. The only child of an Irish American mother and a father who emigrated from Germany, Alice grew up in a neighborhood populated by a large number of French Canadians and, as a result, heard more French spoken than English during those early years. Taking an interest in gymnastics at an early age, Alice began competing in junior high school and went on to join the varsity team at the state university she attended as an undergraduate. Her coach ran gymnastics camps for kids during the summer and asked Alice if she'd be interested in being an instructor. It was during this time when Alice discovered she enjoyed working with kids and decided to pursue a career in Education. After graduating, she spent a year teaching at a middle school in Boston before returning to graduate school for a degree in Early Childhood Development.



Alice's interest in Southeast Asia first started in the early 80's when she noticed the growing number of refugees coming to her school from Cambodia and Vietnam.

I had my first students that were Cambodian and Vietnamese. I remember them very clearly... An's parents walked across Vietnam and put their four kids on a boat, and not including themselves. And they came to this country... But I was just kind of fascinated by this. Here was a twelve-year-old girl who had been put on a boat by her parents and let go.

The story from her shy student from Cambodia was equally compelling, highlighting the physical and psychological difficulties the young girl had experienced as she left her war torn country with her mother who had at one point been left for dead in a dump. Even though they were her students some thirty years ago, Alice has kept in touch with both of them to this day.

When the application announcement for the study tour reached her, Alice knew it would be an opportunity to see the land that she had heard so many stories about from her past students. Her decision to apply was also accompanied by some doubt as to whether it was appropriate given how close to retirement she was, as well as the fact that she had already participated in another study tour to Trinidad and Tobago in 1979. In the end, however, she decided to apply without being too attached to the outcome. Having traveled on her own quite extensively, Alice's other travel experiences included trips to Mexico, Haiti, Jamaica, and India.

Of her experience in Southeast Asia, Alice remembered how the visits brought to life the horrific stories she had been told by past students through the years, particularly those of two young women, one from Cambodia and the other from Vietnam, both of whom she became close with.

I guess it was around the 80s, [when] we started getting the kids from Cambodia and Vietnam... I remember several specific kids two of [whom] I still keep in touch with. Phi came from a family [where] there were four kids; and her parents walked across Vietnam with their kids and put [them] on a boat and they (the parents) didn't get on the boat... Tala was very quiet and kind of a very repressed young lady. Her mom had been injured [during] the Khmer Rouge regime and her body was actually thrown in a dump [although] she was not dead.

Even when these young women moved on to high school and college, they would often visit Alice who would help them with their schoolwork and talk to them about their future plans. Of the relatively large community of Cambodian Americans living in the area, Alice reflected on the challenges they face to preserve a culture and identity that the younger generation seems to be drifting away from.

I think in the Cambodian community there's a crisis on how to keep [their] culture... I think the Cambodian kids who were born here get very Americanized... I see fewer Cambodian kids at the temple every year when we go over there... The parents aren't talking that much about being Cambodian, although they want to go back to Cambodia... I think it's hard, it's very hard; I think they lived through something that's not easy to talk about and they don't know how to... and many of them have something similar to Post-traumatic stress [disorder] and it's not really being addressed.

Of her study tour experience, one of Alice's more distinct memories was of the hotel the group stayed at in Phnom Penh and the numerous American couples who were there adopting Cambodian infants.

That made a big impression on me because I've known many people here who had [Cambodian] kids... but that was kind of an amazing thing to watch. And how the people in that hotel were just so set up for helping everybody - the new parents, the babies and everything, you know? And the [hotel staff] would be waiting on tables [while] holding a baby. Where else are you going to see that (laughs)?

Like most of the other teachers, she was also struck by the poverty in Cambodia and the memories of the killing fields that still haunt the people today.

I think most people in Cambodia are fairly poor... but they didn't seem; I don't know if I want to use the word "not happy" or "happy," but I think that whole Khmer Rouge [period] was so trauma producing that I think most [Cambodian] people I know are still spinning to some degree. The people who survived, especially here [in the U.S.], have a kind of guilt that spurs them to work two or three jobs and continually send money back because they survived.

In Vietnam, Alice was struck by the rapid development she saw in the cities. She also perceived a faster pace of life among the Vietnamese people who she described as more on the go and "almost aggressive" compared to the Thais or Cambodians.

When asked how the study tour affected her professionally, Alice commented that it certainly made her more interested in certain topics related to what she saw or experienced in Southeast Asia. In addition to using the resource materials she brought back to liven up the curriculum, such as photographs of indigenous plants and animals, she also noticed that many of her Cambodian students would light up when she told them about her trip.

I do think about [the study tour] and I think its influenced me... I think the world is a hard place right now. I think it's really hard for kids to understand; and I think when you can use yourself, giving examples from your own life in your own travels, it makes [the curriculum] much more real to them. [In 2001,] we still had Cambodian kids [at the middle school] and I was like, "oh, I went to Angkor Wat," and their eyes would open up and they would like say "you did?" To be able to say those things put a different feeling for them about it, you know? That somebody they knew who wasn't Cambodian went to Cambodia and was interested in it [was meaningful].

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **DATA ANALYSIS**

This chapter analyzes the data displayed in the previous chapter with the purpose of developing a more comprehensive understanding of the long-term effects of the study tour on the personal and professional development of participating teachers. Analysis of interview transcripts identified three conceptual themes that describe events or processes that were facilitated by the international study tour experience, and had the combined effect of contributing to the development of sociocultural consciousness, multicultural perspectives, expanded worldviews, deeper levels of cultural understanding and empathy towards marginalized groups in the United States and around the world. The themes include: formative intercultural experiences, “outsider” experiences, and critical reflection. In concert, the three conceptual themes had the potential to facilitate the development of sociocultural consciousness by providing experiential and affective learning opportunities that exposed teachers to new cultural perspectives on local and global issues, leading to critical reflection on issues related to their own identity and worldview.

To illustrate how each conceptual theme contributed to the development of sociocultural consciousness, I offer a visual model (see Figure 1) where the three themes are represented in a Venn diagram indicating areas of development in the shared, overlapping areas. Sociocultural consciousness, described in more detail in the next section, occurred when participants described how a study tour experience had the effect of touching upon all of the conceptual themes leading to a more multicultural worldview.

## An International Study Tour's Impact on the Development of Sociocultural Consciousness

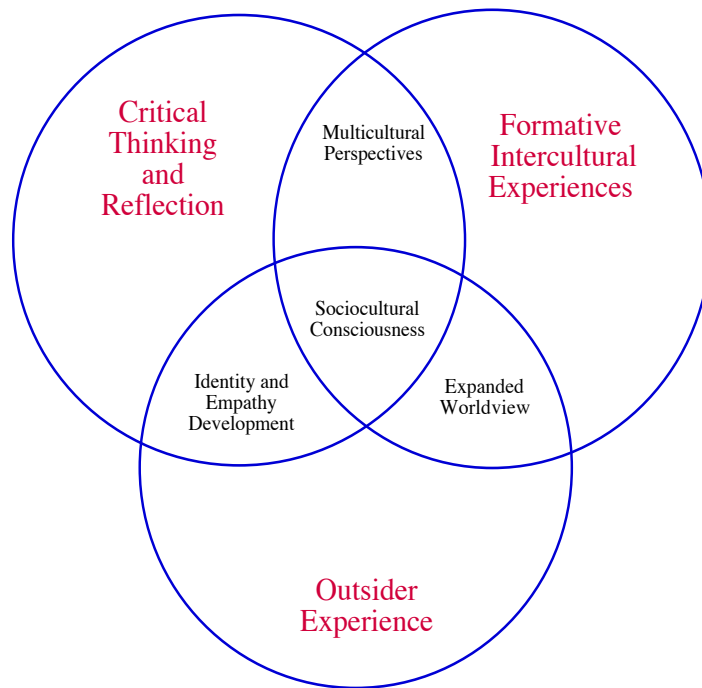


Figure 1. The Development of Sociocultural Consciousness

### **Sociocultural Consciousness**

The term “sociocultural consciousness” broadly describes the awareness that one’s worldview is not universal, but profoundly influenced by life experiences, as mediated by factors related to culture and identity (Villegas & Lucas, 2007). It is, therefore, unique to the individual in terms of that person’s background, specifically the formative life experiences each teacher identified as having contributed to his/her initial worldview. The impact of certain study tour experiences on the sociocultural

consciousness of participants seemed to vary by participant based on a number of factors including: age, gender, ethnic and cultural background, “outsider” and other life experiences. In general, however, participants who described having had only limited exposure to diversity and spent most of their lives in relatively homogeneous cultural settings seemed to be more affected by their study tour experiences in terms of sociocultural consciousness development than those who had either traveled extensively or who had had significant exposure to culturally diverse people and ideas previously. Evidence of sociocultural consciousness development came from an analysis of phenomenological interview transcripts, as well as other data sources, where participants acknowledged an awareness of other worldviews based on an intercultural experience, which led to a process of critical thinking and reflection. The “outsider” experience facilitated the process by allowing the participant to more clearly see how his or her own cultural behaviors, attitudes and biases informed his or her original worldview. Sociocultural consciousness was most evident when a teacher articulated a modified worldview that was inclusive of new multicultural perspectives and/or worldviews.

The following sections briefly describe the three conceptual themes before analyzing the impact of specific study tour experiences on participating teachers. Each conceptual theme represents a component of the affective learning that took place as a result of the study tour experience. It is important to note that these conceptual themes emerged from analysis of this specific study tour. Sociocultural consciousness development is not uniquely affected by international study tours but can take place under a variety of circumstances apart from international travel, as seemed to be the case for several teachers. Generally speaking, the conceptual themes alone or in tandem had

the potential of contributing to the development of higher degrees empathy for culturally diverse students and their families, the development of expanded worldviews, and the development of multicultural perspectives. When all three themes were described as a result of a study tour experience, teachers experienced transformative learning, which often impacted their development of sociocultural consciousness.

One problematic aspect of trying to determine whether sociocultural consciousness development took place among study tour participants was the fact that the term itself is a highly abstract concept that has received very little attention in the research literature, particularly in the realm of international study tours. In developing the criteria, much time was spent considering the Villegas and Lucas (2007) definition of sociocultural consciousness before coming to the conclusion that to determine whether it occurred participants needed to articulate not only their recognition of other cultural perspectives and worldviews, but also an understanding of how their worldview is the product of their own cultural identity and life experiences. While the three conceptual themes are far from infallible they do serve as a useful, albeit imperfect, rubric to analyze the study tour's impact on teachers.

### **The “Outsider” Experience**

The “outsider” experience describes how a person feels when s/he is among a group or population with whom s/he does not fit in with either culturally or socially. It was a significant component of the study tour for two distinct reasons. The first was because it provided an opportunity for teachers to develop an affective understanding of what it feels like being an “outsider” and a minority in a country whose culture and

customs are significantly different than what s/he is accustomed to. Affective understandings are best described as understandings of issues and other phenomenon that go beyond cognition and involve feelings and/or emotions. Experiencing the challenges newcomers face doing seemingly simple things, such as crossing a busy street as Lori learned, provided an affective learning opportunity for teachers to develop a deeper sense of empathy for immigrant students and their families. Cushner (2007) describes how international travel experiences allow people to feel what it's like to live outside the mainstream where they are perceived as "the other," and experience what happens to their identity when they are no longer in control. By taking participants out of their comfort zone and putting them in an environment where their attitudes and behaviors were no longer considered the cultural norm, the teachers also became more critically aware of their own cultural idiosyncrasies, attitudes and biases. As Sara, a teacher and coordinator of the study tour, remarked:

Its not just about teachers seeing the world, its also about teachers seeing themselves, and themselves in the world. And part of being able to really see yourself, I think, is by removing yourself from whatever community it is that you feel so comfortable and normal and natural in; [where] you don't think twice about who you are... or what your own culture is. And so, I think by removing yourself from that safety, that normal space where you just are and you don't think about it or question it at all, and going somewhere else, wherever it is... you're able to see other normals, and realize that your normal is no more normal than any other normal. So, I think it allows you to de-center your own reality and see the realm of possibility and the ways other people live, and the cultures that other people have...

The second reason the "outsider" experience was significant for teachers was because it facilitated critical thinking and reflection on a range of sociopolitical issues specific to the host country but similar in many respects to events, both past and present, taking place in the United States. Topics brought up by study tour participants included:



treatment of people with disabilities, the plight of migrant workers, economic disparity and poverty, effects of globalization, and gender issues.

### **Formative Intercultural Experiences**

Formative intercultural experiences include those events and critical incidents that study tour participants identified as having contributed to a growing awareness of other cultural perspectives and worldviews. These experiences also contributed the development of new multicultural perspectives and expanded worldviews in some cases. Often, these experiences would serve as the main catalysts for participants to engage in a process of critical thinking and reflection that not only facilitated a deeper understanding and appreciation of the host culture, but also of issues related to teachers' own culture, including matters related to identity and privilege. This closely matches Mezirow's definition of transformative learning. Examples of formative experiences include Kelly's experience in Cambodia with the little girl scrambling to pick up a half-eaten piece of fruit, or Jacqui's experience seeing the skulls at the Killing Fields memorial. One major difference between professional development activities that are classroom-based and those that integrate experiential and affective learning opportunities, such as those experienced by members of the study tour, is that the latter provides more opportunities for spontaneous events and incidents to occur, which then become indelibly etched into memories leading to genuine intercultural learning.

### **Critical Reflection**

The critical reflection process is an important component of experiential and multicultural education for a variety of reasons. Dewey (1938), in his manifesto on experiential education, wrote that transforming experience into knowledge was a process that emphasized the freedom of the learner while rejecting the external imposition of others to decide what was important. Without reflecting on the meaning of an experience, no new knowledge would be created. Furthermore, the critical component of the reflection process is particularly salient in the realm of multicultural education and its emphasis on empowering students and teachers to become more critically aware of the connection between power and the production of knowledge in order to build a more equal and just society (Nieto & Bode, 2008). Critical pedagogy, a central tenet of multicultural education, involves critical thinking, reflection and action, which, according to Freire (1970), allows students to see reality through multiple perspectives and challenge the dominant paradigms of discourse in order to make positive change for those who have been historically marginalized as a result of their social status.

Many of the teachers described how certain study tour experiences caused them think more deeply about issues specific to their own country and critically reflect on matters related to their own culture, identities and privilege. The glaring socioeconomic differences between the rich and poor in places like Cambodia were particularly instrumental in spurring critical reflection about a wide range of related topics, including the ethics of tourism in developing countries, and the role of non-governmental organization (NGOs) in national education systems. Certain study tour experiences also caused some study tour participants to critically reflect on their own country's past and

present military involvement in countries like Vietnam and Iraq. Jen, after visiting a non-governmental organization in Cambodia whose mission is to clear landmines and other unexploded ordinance, questioned why the United States didn't provide more assistance given they had mapped the geographical areas that were bombed.

The following sections analyze how specific study tour experiences affected study tour teachers using the conceptual themes as a guide.

### **Poverty**

One example of how the study tour facilitated the development of sociocultural consciousness comes by way of Kelly's experience seeing poverty in Cambodia, which was a formative intercultural experience. Coming from a fairly privileged background by most standards, Kelly was struck by the scale and magnitude of the poverty she saw in the cities and countryside of Cambodia. Trying to make sense of it all, she comments about how she now understands how fortunate she is to have what she has, which as an "outsider" allows her to realize her privilege in more concrete terms. This acknowledges to some extent her recognition of the connection between identity and privilege. From an "outsider" perspective, Kelly observes our guide, Dith, toss a half eaten piece of fruit on the ground that quickly gets picked up by a child looking for food, she concludes that his failure to take notice of what just occurred is probably the result of his being desensitized to such displays of poverty. Her rationalization that, "he had lived with poverty for so long that he didn't even notice it," is significant because it demonstrates her ability to look at poverty from his perspective in an attempt to understand the reasoning behind his behavior, which to her seemed insensitive. By seeing it from his perspective, though,

Kelly seems to develop a deeper understanding of the reality of living in a country like Cambodia where there was so much poverty, but also how some people react to it given its pervasiveness in certain parts of the world. One negative aspect of this interpretation is that it models insensitivity and/or apathy towards people living in poverty. While Kelly's awareness of issues related to poverty expands and becomes more nuanced because of her experience, she is still unsure of how to respond and defers to what she sees other "cultural insiders" do, which is to pretend not to notice. Clearly, she was overwhelmed by the scale and magnitude of the problem. The counterpoint to this example, however, can be seen through Kelly's observations at the school for rural poor children sponsored by a Cambodian NGO. There, she observes a Cambodian teacher who she notes kept on teaching despite not having been paid for months and who didn't have much by way of teaching materials and school supplies. Compared to the "tons of books and pencils" she has in the United States, this teacher kept on teaching because "she knew what she was doing was important." In comparing her situation to that of the Cambodian teacher, Kelly seems to reflect critically on the privileges and resources she enjoys as a teacher in the United States, confessing that she often complains about not having enough preparation time and resources. Seeing the Cambodian teacher do her job with enthusiasm despite not getting paid and the scarcity of teaching materials provided Kelly with another cultural perspective on the importance of teaching in spite of challenging working conditions. Her observation of the crowds of Cambodian families picnicking in the park on Sunday also caused her to critically reflect on American culture and the focus on money. She remarks that many Americans take what they have for granted and concludes, "you can be happy with very little."

The development of sociocultural consciousness that started in Cambodia also provided the foundation from which she was able to broaden her understanding of issues related to cultural identity, politics and poverty. This time, during her honeymoon in Mexico several years after the study tour. As in Cambodia, Kelly is once again struck by the kindness and generosity of the local people in Cancun who despite their modest means offer her the use of their home's lavatory as she and other guests from her resort take refuge inland from an approaching hurricane. She notes, the local people "even offered us food," and concludes from this experience that, "poor people are often the most generous." In contrast, Kelly is both shocked and embarrassed by the behavior of an American couple who are a part of their small group and show no gratitude to the local man who offers to bring them bread and coffee in the midst of the waning storm. She makes the observation that many privileged people tend to look down on the people waiting on them despite the fact that "they're people too." She remarks that she didn't think the couple saw the locals as people at all, but as "people they should pay to do whatever." Although this experience occurred apart from the study tour, the reason why she was so anxious to tell it seems to indicate that Kelly believed that there was a connection to her experiences in Cambodia that allowed her to develop a more nuanced and critical understanding about issues related to poverty, identity, and privilege.

Her growing awareness of issues related to poverty also led to new insights on other sociopolitical issues. This became evident when she made the comparison between Thai migrant workers in Bangkok and Mexican laborers coming to the United States to earn money to send back to their families in Mexico. Her point that "it gives you another insight to the fact of why they want to be here" is indicative of her ability to look at the

issue of poverty from different cultural perspectives and come away with a deeper sense of understanding and empathy towards migrant workers and their families. It also demonstrates how Kelly was able to use the Cambodia experience as a foundation from which she could continue to learn about issues related to poverty, immigration, and globalization. In developing a more nuanced understanding of issues of poverty, Kelly's worldview shifts towards one that is both more conscious of her own identity and privilege, as well as culturally aware of other perspectives, attitudes and worldviews.

### **Globalization and Development**

Although the concept of globalization was one of the three programmatic themes of the study tour, which also included: transnationalism and diaspora, most teachers only had a limited conceptual understanding of its broad scope beyond its most common use as a term describing the internationalization of trade and commerce. Many teachers accurately pointed out giant neon billboards advertising Coca Cola products, the ubiquitous McDonalds and Kentucky Fried Chicken restaurants scattered throughout the cities of Southeast Asia as evidence of globalization. For Lori, however, the concept of globalization went much further. Starting during her trip to China the previous year, Lori had begun to develop a much more nuanced understanding of the impact of globalization based on parallels she saw in Asia and the United States.

As an "outsider," Lori's experience in Thailand trying to figure out how to cross a busy street illustrates how even seemingly simple tasks can be a challenge for people unfamiliar with the rules of the host country. When an elderly Thai woman approaches her and asks her in English if she needs help, Lori is both grateful and surprised at the kindness displayed by the stranger who gently points out the pedestrian overpass further

down the road. For Lori, the kindness offered by the Thai woman was a critical/formative incident, one that caused her to reflect on American culture and contemplate how people in Springfield would have responded if roles were reversed.

I had this Masters degree... I knew all this stuff... but I didn't have the practical knowledge to get across the street in Bangkok. And I said to myself, "if that woman had been standing in Springfield and looking as confused as I did, would someone have been as kind enough to her?" I'm not sure [anyone] would have.

When asked why not, Lori replies:

I'm not so sure that people in Springfield are as aware when they see someone looking very confused. We're so isolated from each other now that people just cannot see.

Lori's description of this incident demonstrates how her "outsider" experience catalyzed a critical reflection process involving contemporary American culture and what she sees as the growing isolation of young people. As one who fondly recalls the days when her entire family would share a meal every Sunday, Lori's criticism of globalization is in part due to the negative impact it's had on communities and families. Today, many of her students don't know what it is to sit with their families for dinner. Instead, she says, they eat alone in their bedrooms in front of their computers. Her "outsider" experience crossing the street in Thailand reminded her of the time when people were more in touch and aware, and not so preoccupied with technology. Yet she admits that even this phenomenon is not unique to the United States alone. Having seen the destruction of old traditional neighborhood where several generations of a family lived together to make way for the Olympics in China reminded her of Springfield's own experiment with urban renewal several decades ago. An experiment that, according to Lori, failed miserably and only served to further isolate people from their families and communities.

This analysis seems to support Merryfield's (2000) study, which found that teachers were more apt to see contradictions in their own society as a result of their "outsider" experiences in foreign countries. In drawing the comparison, Lori seems to be critiquing American culture and how advances in technology have significantly altered how Americans, young people in particular, communicate in the Internet age. Her job as a teacher is to find ways for her students to see the bigger picture, think critically, and be a "pack of wolves" instead of a herd of sheep.

They have all this access but what are they connecting to? To me as a teacher, my job is to make that plug [spark]. It's to make a connection. That [they're] grounded to something.

The experiences facilitated critical reflection leading to an expanded worldview and more nuanced understanding of some of the negative effects of globalization, particularly those related to technology and how we as a society have moved away from more traditional forms of interpersonal communications and relationships.

### **Ethics of Tourism in Developing Countries**

Another demonstration of how poverty spurred critical reflection occurred during a group meeting in Siem Reap, Cambodia when Stan questioned the ethics of tourism in developing countries like Cambodia. He stated that he was deeply disturbed by the "enormous gulf" in wealth distribution, the gap between rich and poor, which was epitomized by the contrast between the high-rise luxury hotels and the dusty shacks standing in their shadow. Moreover, he was critical of the "tourism angle" and the continued exploitation of Cambodia's "culture and society" for the sake of tourism, and wondered aloud how this should be raised with students. By posing these questions to the



group, Stan demonstrated a different level of awareness with regard to issues of poverty and privilege, specifically one that critically examined the role of the tourist in perpetuating a system that benefited the “elites” at the expense of local people. Similar to Kelly’s experience with Dith, Stan was uncomfortable with the apathy he perceived from cultural insiders, as well as fellow travelers. Simply ignoring the issue was difficult because doing so ran counter to his personal and political ideology of making a positive difference in the world we live in. It also illustrated his own discomfort at being part of a system that benefited a group of elites, of which he now identified with despite the alienation he felt as the child of working class “townies” in an upscale college town. In the months following the group’s return to the United States, Stan describes coming to terms with the contradictions he felt regarding the morality of tourism in developing countries by making an analogy to waitresses in the United States who work multiple jobs in order to earn enough money to survive. He writes, “Does that mean I no longer go to restaurants? By the same token it seems counterproductive to not go overseas, as a ‘tourist,’ because my Yankee dollars might be tainted by capitalism. How would I learn about those other cultures and societies if I did not go visit them?” (personal communication, 2001) Stan’s observations and “outsider” experience seeing the contrast between the rich and poor in Southeast Asia led to critical reflection about his role as a tourist in perpetuating a system of economic inequality but eventually accepts it as a valuable and educative experience for him both a teacher and a citizen of the world. Stan recognized the tensions in his own choices as a consumer and tourist as a result of his being in a society where there was such a wide gap between those with money and those

without. Through this experience he was able to expand his worldview and develop a more nuanced understanding of multicultural issues related to identity and privilege.

### **The Cambodian Genocide**

The Cambodia segment of the study tour was both an educational and emotional experience for all the study tour teachers, especially those who had not known much about the genocide that killed an estimated 1.8 million people in the four-year period beginning in 1975. Through the experience of visiting memorials like the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum, seeing the amputees on the streets, and listening to the stories of survivors study tour teachers developed an affective understanding of the horrific events that transpired in Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge. While a few of the teachers had some knowledge of the genocide based on accounts from former students, the experience of actually being in Cambodia made the reality of the tragedy all the more clearer and emotionally powerful. For Alice, who taught successive generations of Cambodian American students starting in the 1980's, visiting Cambodia allowed her to understand the "Cambodian personality," and why so many students and parents were reluctant to talk about their experiences. Alice's experience in Cambodia were profound in that they shed light on the scale, magnitude and horror of the genocide and the devastating effect it continues to have on survivors and their families. Alice's experience growing up in a culturally diverse neighborhood followed by later experiences as a world traveler seemed to have a significant impact on her sociocultural consciousness. For that reason, the study tour didn't seem to have as profound an effect on Alice's sociocultural consciousness as it did for other study tour participants. It did, however, expand her

worldview and make her more interested in topics related to her study tour experiences. It also provided new insights into issues confronting the Cambodian American community, issues she noticed as a volunteer at the Cambodian temple near her home. These include what she called a “crisis” in the Cambodian American community, where she sees a growing disconnect between the first generation of Cambodians who came over as refugees and are now parents, and their children, who have become so Americanized that they rarely visit the temple anymore.

Jacqui was also profoundly affected by her visits to genocide memorials in Cambodia. Although she already had some knowledge of the killing fields after hearing stories from past students, visiting the sites where mass executions had taken place was a powerful experience that she described as her most profound memory of Cambodia. She was particularly moved by the story of our guide who at nine years old had been ordered to kill people as part of the campaign to wipe out “enemies” of the Khmer Rouge, which included women and children. He confided to Jacqui that he felt such guilt at having been a part of the executions that he was spending the rest of his life trying to make up for his actions. Jacqui was also struck by the fact that the glass case where the skulls were piled up was not locked. When the guide reached over and opened the door to the case, Jacqui remembered the smell that wafted out and hit her.

I couldn't believe that I was looking at real people's skulls that had been... these really were the Killing Fields. I was there; this [guide] was a person who lived through that. It was so real. My life was so different, you know? I couldn't...

Seeing the skulls and hearing the story of our guide were all formative experiences that Jacqui described as her most profound memory of Cambodia. The sight and “musty” smell of the pile of skulls in the glass case transformed what before had been merely the

knowledge that a genocide had taken place to an affective understanding of what transpired and the enormous human cost that was inflicted.

But to be there and see real skulls, [to] see their country, [to] see their religion... it just made such a huge difference. I can't put it away, you know? I can never really put it away. It's a visual in my own mind. And seeing the people in Cambodia, you know in Phnom Penh? You walk down the street [and] I don't know how many people you'd see with one leg, you know an arm missing; it became normal. What wasn't normal at all to me became absolutely normal to see... person after person just missing limbs, an arm with no prosthetic or some ramshackle thing...

Jacqui's description of how her perception of "normal" shifted as a result of being in a country where so many people had been maimed during the genocide indicates an awareness that her worldview was based on her own life experiences and what for her was considered normal. The experience of being in Cambodia gave Jacqui another cultural perspective and worldview of what normal was for them and why it was that way, which was quite different and, as a result, contributed to her development of sociocultural consciousness.

### **The Vietnam War and Communism**

The majority of the study tour participants were in high school or college at the height of the Vietnam War and several spoke at length about the impact of the war on their lives. For those teachers, the opportunity to visit Vietnam represented a chance not only to experience the country that had dominated the headlines for so long during their formative years, but to also understand the Vietnamese perspective on what they called the American War. For some teachers, like Jen and Lynn, this was a deeply unsettling experience. Jen, who described feeling some "guilt" visiting Vietnam because of the pain

the war had inflicted on people she and her family were close to, perceived a slight degree of hostility directed towards Americans, which she compared to the resentment some southerners still feel towards northerners because of the Civil War. Similarly, Lynn also felt conflicted about visiting the home of the “enemy,” especially given her upbringing in a military family who held deeply anti-communist views dating back to the Soviet occupation of their family’s homeland of Ukraine. Her perception that “they were still gloating that they won” illustrates the angst she must have felt as she visited different tourist sites and memorials that described American military aggression and the atrocities committed during the war. Jen’s “they’re still pissed comment” seems to be also based on her mistaking messages of national pride with lingering hostility. Of Lynn’s first visit, she felt she was not seeing the real Vietnam but only what the Vietnamese government wanted her to see. For both women, as well as for other members of the group, their experience in Vietnam was also negatively impacted by what they perceived as the intrusive presence of government minders who monitored the group’s activities during field trips and, on one occasion, abruptly cancelled a tour to a shoe factory for unknown reasons. As Lynn commented:

We were restricted [in Vietnam]. There was a tenseness in the atmosphere; it was definitely a tenseness. There was something about it; [and] I just didn't feel comfortable. I felt that there was a lot of propaganda on their part...

Despite their misgivings, the Vietnam segment provided both teachers with an affective understanding of what it’s like living under the watchful eye of a communist government, which they found both repressive and disturbing. Their experience seems to support Casale-Gionnola’s (2000) study that found some international experiences had the potential of reinforcing negative stereotypes and narrowing participants’ perspectives

under certain conditions. Jen's "they're still pissed" comment illustrates that finding and was likely based on the negative portrayal of Americans she was exposed to during field trips to the different war memorials and museums. Gibson's (1991) study, however, found that even negative experiences overseas had value in that they increased awareness of other realities. Jen did comment on how different Vietnam was than what had been represented in the American media, which echoes Gibson's findings that despite her negative experiences it was still a valuable learning opportunity. Gibson's research also found that study abroad programs that were too short had the potential of providing an incomplete picture of the host country. By contrast, Lynn's second visit in 2007 gave her a more rounded and positive view of Vietnamese culture and people. Free of the minders that dogged her first visit, Lynn was able to travel to the north and found the people there more open and friendly. By the end of her second visit, Lynn had a distinctly more positive impression of Vietnam, saying of that visit that she loved it.

In analyzing Jen and Lynn's Vietnam experience, it seems that duration and exposure to different regions did have an affect on how each of them perceived the country and its people. Another related factor was that neither Jen nor Lynn reported having many conversations with local Vietnamese people during the 2001 study tour. The presence of government minders during field trips and their control of the group's itinerary decreased the opportunity for genuine face-to-face encounters with regular people. The lack of such interaction seems a likely reason why Lynn's impression of Vietnam changed so much after her second visit in 2007. Although Jen expanded her worldview by developing an affective understanding of communism in Vietnam, the impact of the experience on her development of sociocultural consciousness wasn't

readily apparent as she provided no evidence that her awareness of other cultural perspectives had caused her to critically reflect on issues related to her own identity and culture. Likewise, Lynn's first visit to Vietnam seemed to have little effect other than confirming the suspicions she had of the Vietnamese government prior to visiting. Her second visit, however, did seem to have an effect on sociocultural consciousness development based on the dramatic change in attitude towards Vietnamese culture and the people, which came about after travelling to different regions of the country and having the opportunity to meet and talk with local people who she perceived as more open and friendly.

Jacqui's experience in Vietnam differed significantly from that of Jen and Lynn in that the war had a direct consequence on her life, specifically her failed marriage to a Vietnam veteran. The experience of visiting war memorials like the Cu Chi Tunnels, seeing the booby traps, and feeling the heat and humidity allowed Jacqui to develop an affective understanding of the conditions her ex-husband had endured fighting against a ferocious and determined enemy. In realizing those conditions, she came away with a deeper sense of empathy for him and other veterans who returned from combat with Post-traumatic stress disorder and other psychological problems.

The Vietnam experience also allowed Jacqui to understand the cost and consequences of the war from the Vietnamese perspective. Before coming to Vietnam, Jacqui imagined a nation forever embittered towards Americans because of the death and destruction they had caused. While visits to the American War Museum in Ho Chi Minh City confirmed the stories of civilian suffering she had heard as an anti-war protester in college, Jacqui was surprised by the friendliness of the Vietnamese towards Americans

despite the war. When she asked a Vietnamese man she met at one of the memorials why there wasn't any hostility, he told her that the Vietnamese perspective was that the war with the United States was but one conflict in a much longer struggle against colonialism by countries like France and China. In discovering a cultural perspective much different than what she expected, Jacqui expanded her awareness of another worldview and cultural perspective on the significance of the war. The question as to whether this experience had any impact on the development of Jacqui's sociocultural consciousness is harder to determine but somewhat doubtful in my opinion. The Vietnamese man's comment, while exposing another cultural perspective on the war in the larger context of the struggle against colonialism, didn't have the added effect of causing Jacqui to critically reflect on her own culture any more than she probably had in the past. Instead, it seemed to have the effect of reinforcing her already critical view of American foreign policy, not only in Vietnam but in modern conflict areas such as Iraq and Afghanistan as well.

### **Cultural Awareness and Sensitivity**

The "outsider" experience also played a significant role in the development of empathy and cultural sensitivity towards culturally diverse students and their families. As an "outsider" in a foreign country, Kelly described her first impression of Vietnam as being so overwhelming that it caused an anxiety attack or, as she termed it, "a meltdown." The pace of city life, the crowds of people, the noisy and congested traffic, the heat and humidity were so contrary to what she was used to that it made her feel physically sick. Yet, she also noticed that despite the frenetic pace of life, the Vietnamese



people were remarkably civil and polite to each other. After observing a fender bender where she noticed that the involved parties were very “respectful” towards each other, Kelly commented that she was surprised that there wasn’t more “bad language” and “fingers flying,” as would most likely have been the case in the United States. Like Jen’s experience crossing the street in Bangkok, Kelly was able to develop a deeper understanding of Vietnamese culture and customs through her “outsider” experience, specifically the practice of keeping emotions in check and avoiding confrontational behaviors that might cause one to lose face. Seeing how this played out on the streets of Ho Chi Minh City not only shed light on the extent to which such cultural behaviors are played out in everyday life but also caused her to critically reflect on her own culture and the tendency of Americans to be more direct and up front when communicating with each other. She also reflected on her past interactions with foreign-born Asian parents of students and how her experience in Vietnam made her more aware of the role culture has in the way people communicate with each other. As a result, she says, she has changed her “say things as they are” approach that typified her professional interactions with parents before the study tour to one that is more culturally aware and sensitive. With Asian parents now, she says, “I take a little bit more time.”

### **Treatment of People with Disabilities**

Another example of how the “outsider” experience caused a study tour teacher to critically reflect about his/her culture is Lori’s experience seeing people with significant disabilities employed in labor-intensive jobs. This happened first in China and then again

in Cambodia. On a previous study tour to China, Lori came across a man with Down Syndrome repairing windows in the ancient city of Xian.

And here was this guy who was glazing window at 6 o'clock in the morning and I said to myself I don't think this man could get a job anywhere in America. So, yeah, China was backwards in a lot of ways... but [these people] had jobs. Maybe they weren't well paying jobs but they were doing something that benefited each other...

Again, in Cambodia, Lori came across a person with an obvious disability who was working on a road construction crew.

There was a kid in Cambodia that was swinging a 20-pound sledgehammer with one arm... this one massive arm. So, we talked to him; we asked, "how long have you been working?" And he said, "I've been doing this for two years," in English! Two years he had been on the road crew; and he was driving spikes in a guardrail. He would never get a job anywhere in the United States. He was handicapped. Would you hire a one-armed construction guy? Those are the things that kind of [make you wonder].

When asked how the experience of seeing people with obvious mental and physical disabilities gainfully employed impacted her, Lori contrasted what she saw in China and Cambodia with her own country's attitude towards these people.

I was thinking to myself that [Americans] have all these rules and laws; and the rules and laws protect so many of us, but it also isolates so many of us. Do we have a job for everyone? There was a time when we did; and maybe we have to revisit what kind of jobs we can give people [or] help people get. Because that man obviously had some self-esteem.

As was the case with the woman she gave five-dollars to in Cambodia, Lori was impressed by the quiet and stoic dignity of the people she met who still retained a sense of pride and dignity despite their misfortune. The experience caused Lori to critically reflect on American society and the cultural norms she was accustomed to regarding people with mental and physical disabilities. In seeing the workers in China and

Cambodia contribute in ways that were productive and had the result of raising their self-esteem, Lori questions the American tendency to view people with disabilities from a deficit perspective rather than help them identify and develop skills that allow them to lead meaningful and productive lives. Once again, Lori's perspective as an "outsider" causes her to look inward and critically reflect on her own culture's general attitude and treatment of a group of people and come to a more nuanced understanding of different cultural perspectives and attitudes. The impact of this experience was formative and represent transformative learning because she changed her frame of reference based on other cultural norms regarding inclusion for people with disabilities. It also had an impact on Lori's development of sociocultural consciousness because the experience led her to become more aware of how her original worldview regarding people with disabilities shifted after realizing other cultural perspectives.

### **Early "Outsider" Experiences**

While "outsider" experiences that took place during the study tour contributed to the development of empathy towards culturally diverse students for some teachers, many also reported previous "outsider" experiences as having been influential in their development of empathy, such as those occurring during their childhood. Zora, who attended a Spanish-speaking school in Puerto Rico when she was six years old, described her memories of that experience and how it affected her attitude towards students from other countries.

I can see how people feel today when they come from say Puerto Rico. They don't speak English and they're put in a [total immersion] classroom; and they are just frustrated, they feel humiliated because [they] feel like [they're] not so smart... So, those things stayed with me in terms of what it feels like. So, when I

encounter students who don't speak English as their first language, I remember a lot and I try not to stigmatize them. Because that has an impact and a lot of teachers who have never known what it feels like don't know that.

Similarly, Jacqui's early "outsider" experience in predominantly Catholic neighborhoods and schools where she was teased for being Jewish seemed to have an early influence on her empathetic disposition towards people who didn't fit in the dominant cultural group. The two people she remembered most from her early years were both teachers who reached out to her in caring and empathetic ways. One was the college professor who encouraged her to finish her undergraduate degree allowing her to take his course via correspondence. The other was her third grade teacher in Worcester, MA.

Her name was Miss. Monroe and she's one of the only teachers whose name I still remember. But she was just very sensitive to me as being different because I was Jewish and the other kids picked on me. The major thing she did was put me in that school play as the angel. She asked my parents if I could do that and they said "sure." You know, so I fit in somewhere. I didn't have to sit out.

Lori's early childhood memory of not being allowed to speak Italian outside of their house because her grandparents worried her dialect would reveal their low social status was also an early influence in her development as an empathetic teacher. Her intelligence, strong will and determination to do and say as she pleased went against many of the social mores of the time, but it also made her more aware of issues of equity, power and discrimination, especially given that she grew up during the 60's when so much social change was already taking place. Later in life, the "outsider" experience would continue as her parents shunned her for well over a decade after she revealed she was a lesbian. Her decision to become a social studies teacher was in large part because of her "outsider" experiences and her desire to educate and inspire future generations to

stand up and fight for justice and equality. Describing her past battles with authority figures who she felt were wronging her, she says:

That really helped me in my career as a teacher because one of the things I truly believe is... as the Lorax stands for the forest, I stand for the children. Sometimes, I'm the only one who has the power to stand up for a kid who has none. And it's usually a kid you don't like.

The impact of these experiences on both Jacqui, Zora and Lori support Suarez's (2003) finding that teachers who learned experientially the concept of "cultural otherness" were more apt to develop an empathetic disposition critical to teaching students from diverse cultural backgrounds and be more aware of and culturally sensitive towards their customs, attitudes and behaviors. It also demonstrates how the development of sociocultural consciousness is not static or dependent on a singular experience, but the product of a lifetime of experiences in which a person is exposed to new cultures and ideas that cause him/her to critically reflect on their own cultural identity, attitudes and beliefs.

### **Professional Development**

Analysis of teacher data suggests that the impact of the study tour on the professional development of teachers was significant. The study tour's stated goals were to update teacher knowledge of contemporary Southeast Asia and facilitate the development of culturally relevant curriculum units based on research and resource materials gathered during the study tour. Surveys conducted before and after the study tour showed that teachers had increased their knowledge of Southeast Asia and its connection to the themes of globalization, transnationalism, and diaspora (see Young,

2002). Study tour teachers also produced curriculum units, which were then shared with other professionals in various venues, including: department meetings, professional development workshops, regional and national conferences, and the website of Five Colleges, Inc., the organization that administered the Fulbright-Hays Group Projects Abroad grant. Curriculum units ranged in subject area and grade level. Examples include: Kelly's, "Southeast Asian Folk Tales" for grade 5; and Zora's "Globalization and the Consumer Culture in Southeast Asia" for grades 9-12.

Based on interviews, most teachers revealed that the curriculum units they developed were used to varying degrees in the classroom but rarely in their entirety due to strict curriculum frameworks that limited the amount of time spent on a particular unit. Instead, teachers were more likely to draw on certain parts of their units and adapt them to the frameworks based on students' interest. Similarly, resource materials brought home from Southeast Asia, such as examples of art, money, picture books, photographs and video, enhanced student learning by providing opportunities for students to see real artifacts from the study tour countries. Lori, for example, reported frequently using photographs from Cambodia in her History class so students can have a visual representation of some of the concepts she is teaching. She also uses the photographs to illustrate the similarities and differences between cultures both in Asia and around the world. Zora still uses the video she took throughout the study tour as a way to provide visual examples of other ways of living. One of her favorites is of a cooking class she and other study tour teachers took in Chiang Mai, Thailand.

It's for cultural awareness... Other times, its just things that will get the kids interested... Not everybody eats McDonalds... But [to show] what people eat, why they eat what they eat, you know that kind of thing. [Its] just to show them [cultural] diversity because not everybody is the same... mostly it's a compare

and contrast [thing]... just to show them that this is the way people live in this part of the world...

Another aspect of the study tour that affected professional development was how the experience made several teachers more aware of the importance of using culturally relevant examples of issues and concepts that affirmed the cultural identity of some of their students. Alice spoke of showing pictures of Angkor Wat in one of her classes and remembering how the eyes of one of her Cambodian American students “lit up.” Lynn spoke of how the study tour changed her teaching to become more culturally inclusive, relevant and affirming to students from diverse cultural backgrounds.

If you're teaching a world geography course, as an example, instead of just teaching about fjords you might teach about the karsts or something from the eastern hemisphere as geographical examples... Instead of just [using] the Amazon River... you might use the Yangtze River.

The development of cultural awareness, understanding and sensitivity wasn't limited to students of Southeast Asian but also extended to groups from other culturally diverse backgrounds. Kelly's understanding of how some Asian cultures put a greater value on the achievements of sons over daughters gave her some insight as to why an Indian couple seemed so much more interested in their son's education than their daughters. She said she made it a point to make sure they knew their daughter was doing well too. Jacqui described how as an English as Second Language teacher she often found herself explaining to other classroom teachers the tragic circumstances from which many of these students from Sudan, Somalia and Liberia, had escaped before coming to the United States. The study tour more than anything else, she says, brought home the fact that students from war torn countries are not only culturally different but have also

experienced war and famine in horrifying and traumatic ways, which is something teachers and administrators need to realize when confronted with certain behavioral issues.

This one child, the boy from Liberia, was taken off the bus because kids were picking on him. Often, [some of] the black kids will pick on the black African kids. They don't understand them... or why they don't speak English, or why they act so differently? They get picked on and this kid fought back. He had been in a war and he fought back and head butted some kid. I tried to explain to the principal, "You know, this kid is fighting for survival."

The impact of this international study tour on the professional development was profound in many respects. In addition to providing learning opportunities that updated cognitive domain knowledge, the study tour also provided many affective learning opportunities that increased teachers' cultural awareness, understanding and empathy.



## **CHAPTER 6**

### **FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS**

This chapter summarizes the findings of study tour impact areas on the personal and professional development of teachers, then discusses the implications for educators, administrators and other people interested in the use of international study tours and study abroad programs as a professional development tool for pre and in-service teachers.

The 2001 international study tour to Southeast Asia provided the context and opportunity for participants to engage in critical thinking and reflection on a host of social, political and economic issues. The experience of being in countries so culturally different than the United States was a formative experience for many teachers because it took them out of their comfort zone, exposed them to other cultural realities, and made them more conscious of issues related to their identity and privilege. By experiencing other realities, teachers were able to compare and contrast their own cultural attitudes and behaviors to those they were observing and critically reflect on both the differences and similarities. In many cases, teachers were able to develop more multicultural and nuanced understandings of more global issues, such as those related to war, poverty, the effects of globalization, and other topics of both local and global concern. Research findings from this study indicate that many of the long-term study tour impact areas are in line with the goals of multicultural education, particularly as they related to the development of sociocultural consciousness.

This study sought to address the following topics and related questions:

- The efficacy of international study tours and study abroad programs as a pedagogical tool for multicultural teacher education. Do such experiences increase cultural understanding, sensitivity, and empathy towards people from diverse cultural backgrounds? If so, how and why?
- The efficacy of international study tours and study abroad programs as a catalyst for the development of critical thinking and reflection skills. In what ways do such experiences provide opportunities for participants to critically reflect on their own cultural identity and resultant worldview?
- The efficacy of experiential and affective learning pedagogies in professional development programs. What are the benefits of these types of pedagogies for teacher professional development?

### **Findings**

**Finding 1: The study tour provided affective learning opportunities for teachers to develop an affective understanding of what it feels like to be a minority and cultural “outsider.”**

The “outsider” experience was significant because it provided an opportunity for teachers to briefly experience some of the realities immigrant and refugee students face as they adjust to life in the United States. Furthermore, visiting countries where English was not widely spoken enhanced the “outsider” experience by intensifying feelings of isolation and replicating some of the challenges immigrants face as they adjust to life in a culture where they have few support systems and little practical knowledge of the language and customs. The term “affective understanding” describes understanding an

idea, issue or concept on an emotional or “gut-feeling” level. Affective understandings are an important component for the development of empathy because they provide the context for people to relate to each other’s situation or feelings. For example, Lori’s experience trying to cross the street in Bangkok gave her an affective understanding of what it felt like being an “outsider” in a foreign country. Despite all her education and life experience, she could not figure out how to cross a busy street until an elderly Thai woman approached her to ask if she needed help. This incident demonstrated to Lori how even the simplest tasks, ones that most people take for granted, become significant challenges for those who aren’t familiar with the rules and customs of the host country. Similarly, Kelly’s “meltdown” in Vietnam, caused in large part by the “sensory overload” she was experiencing, gave her an affective understanding of what it felt like to be a cultural “outsider.” The frenetic pace of life in Ho Chi Minh City, with all the people, traffic, new sights, smells and sounds eventually caused her to have an emotional breakdown. For Kelly, it demonstrated how overwhelming and mentally exhausting it is adjusting to life in a country where everything is so different.

The study tour also provided an opportunity for some participants to experience what it feels like to be a “minority” in a predominantly homogenous society. One important distinction, however, was that none of the teachers reported feeling as if they had been discriminated against. Yet, the experience of not being a part of the mainstream, both racially and culturally, was a first for some teachers, and it had the effect of making some or them more self-conscious about both their innate and cultural differences. One example is Jen’s experience in Vietnam, where the perception of being a minority and an “outsider” was compounded by her impression that the Vietnamese

people still held a grudge against Americans dating back to the Vietnam/American War. Having come to Vietnam with ambivalent feelings to start with, she left Vietnam with many of those negative feelings reinforced because of her experiences. This finding supports Merryfield's (2000) research that found international experiences to be unique opportunities for teachers to feel what it is like to be perceived as an "outsider."

**Finding 2: The experience of being an "outsider" contributed to the development of higher degrees of cultural sensitivity and empathy toward immigrant students, their parents, and others.**

For many of the study tour teachers, the perception of being an "outsider" in Southeast Asia provided the context for them to develop an affective understanding of some of the challenges immigrant and refugee students face as they adjust to life in the United States. While it would be misleading and inappropriate to suggest that the study tour replicated the hardships these students face, the "outsider" experience did give teachers the context to relate to some of the issues and emotions experienced by these students. This had the effect of creating and deepening empathy, as well as contributing to higher degrees of cultural sensitivity towards immigrant and refugee students.

The study tour was particularly meaningful for teachers who had never experienced what it felt like to be an "outsider" based on issues related to their cultural identity. This finding was especially true for younger teachers, like Kelly, who described having had limited exposure to cultural diversity growing up. Her experience in Vietnam seeing the fender bender and observing the civility people treated each other with caused

her to critically reflect on her own culture, and make a conscious decision to modify how she interacted with Asian parents so that she would be more culturally sensitive.

A related finding was that early “outsider” experiences, such as those occurring during the formative years of childhood and adolescence, also played a significant role in the development of empathetic dispositions in teachers. Zora described her early “outsider” experience as a non-Spanish speaking student in a Puerto Rican school as having contributed to her empathetic disposition towards English language learners and immigrants in her school. Similarly, Jacqui’s “outsider” experience as a Jewish child attending grammar school and living in a predominantly Catholic neighborhood contributed to her highly empathetic disposition towards certain students who were being treated by their peers as “outsiders.”

Certain study tour experiences also allowed teachers to better understand the perspectives of past students, friends and loved ones who experienced war and violence and came back traumatized. Jacqui, for example, left Vietnam with a sense of regret at not having been more sensitive towards her ex-husband, a Vietnam veteran who throughout their marriage showed signs of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Her visit to the Cu Chi Tunnels was an affective learning experience that deepened her empathy for her husband, as well as others scarred by the war. Having felt the humidity and seeing the tunnels and booby traps that were used against American forces, Jacqui finally got a sense of what her ex-husband had gone through.

For other teachers, like Alice and Jen, the horrific stories told by their Cambodian students about the genocide didn’t have the same impact until after they visited the Killing Fields memorials and the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum. Alice later commented

that she finally understood that many of those who escaped the killing fields are still struggling with the effects of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Similarly, Jen recalled the horrific stories she had been told by her past students. But, she said, even though she was sympathetic towards them, she couldn't really "feel" it until after she had visited Cambodia, which for her was too late. Being there gave her the ability to understand more fully the tragic events recounted by her past students.

The study tour provided the conditions and environment for teachers to experience what it felt like to be an "outsider." This contributed to the development of greater degrees of cultural sensitivity and empathy towards students, parents, and other people with whom teachers could empathize with due to their "outsider" experience.

**Finding 3: The perception of being an "outsider" led to transformative learning and facilitated critical thinking and reflection on issues related to privilege and power.**

One of the more prominent findings was that the "outsider" experience prompted many study tour teachers to become more aware of their own cultural attitudes, behaviors and biases as they sought to understand and put into perspective their observations and experiences of people in the three host countries. Transformative learning as defined by Mezirow (1991) involves the process of effecting change in a frame of reference, which the "outsider" experience facilitated. As "outsiders" looking in on foreign cultures, study tour teachers were more apt to critically examine the host country's prevailing attitude and response to controversial issues from their own cultural perspective first, and then from the host culture's perspective based on what they had observed. Kelly's observation

of the young child scrambling to pick up Dith's half-eaten fruit was shocking to her, but she came to recognize that his response of either not noticing or pretending it didn't happen, may have been because he was so used seeing such poverty that he had become desensitized to it. The experience caused Kelly to critically reflect on issues of privilege and power, specifically how normalized the dichotomy between the rich and poor was in Cambodia. In realizing this, she articulates an awareness of her privilege by making the comment about how she now realizes how fortunate she is to have all that she has. Her experience in Cambodia, however, was just the start of a longer transformative learning process that led a more nuanced understanding of poverty and related issues.

In some cases, the hyperawareness of differences between the United States and host countries caused some teachers to critically reflect on their own cultural identities, including multicultural issues related to privilege, fairness and equity. After observing the poverty in Cambodia and how people get by with so little compared to most Americans, Jen makes the comment that Americans are so wasteful that most Cambodians could live off what they throw away. Her comment demonstrates two things: the first is her awareness of a level of poverty that she had never seen before. For her, it is a sad but new reality, but one that causes her to realize how fortunate she is. The second thing is it demonstrates a new critical awareness about her identity as an American, which she subsequently associated with as being wasteful.

The study tour facilitated critical thinking, reflection, and transformative learning on issues related to issues of privilege and power that broadened teachers' worldview and made them more critically aware of their own culture and cultural identity. This included examining cultural notions of good and bad, right and wrong, normal and abnormal in

self-reflective ways that were facilitated by the experience of being an “outsider.” These are key goals of multicultural education that were achieved through early formative and study tour experiences.

**Finding 4: Thorough the use of experiential pedagogies, the study tour provided affective learning opportunities for teachers to examine a wide range of historical and contemporary issues from multiple perspectives.**

Affective learning was facilitated by experiential pedagogies, including field trips, guided tours, and unstructured time for teachers to explore on their own. Many of these experiences were described as having contributed to the development of new knowledge and more nuanced and critical understandings of certain issues based on different cultural perspectives. The visit to the American War Museum in Ho Chi Minh City, for example, illuminated the Vietnamese perspective of the war, which for Lynn and Jen was deeply unsettling. For others, like Stan it provided an alternative perspective of the war, which he would later use in his classroom to encourage critical thinking and understanding issues from multiple perspectives.

Many study tour activities, both planned and unplanned, led to the discovery of new cultural perspectives on historical events such as the Vietnam/American War, as well as more contemporary issues like the impact of globalization on rural communities in Thailand. For many teachers, the experiential and affective nature of this type of learning facilitated a deeper, more nuanced understanding of the host country, the culture and people. It also allowed participants to experience what one teacher referred to as “other normals.” This was particularly significant for the development of sociocultural



consciousness because it de-centered teachers' realities, exposing them to other worldviews and other cultural ways of being.

The "outsider" experience sometimes led to the discovery of contradictions within the participant's original worldview, which in turn led to a process of critical reflection to resolve the contradiction and come to a more nuanced and critical understanding of the issue at hand. Lori's observation of people with disabilities performing jobs they otherwise would have been prohibited from doing in the United States serves as a good example. Seeing the man with Down Syndrome in China repairing a window, and then the one-armed road worker installing a guardrail in Cambodia caused her to critically reflect on American society's tendency to limit what people labeled as "disabled" can do. After concluding that allowing these people to have productive jobs was good for their self-esteem and also good for society, Lori's discovery of another cultural perspective on issues of ableism allowed her to expand her worldview to one that incorporated other cultural perspectives.

Even for more experienced travelers, the emergence of new cultural perspectives was deeply meaningful. Jacqui's conversation with the older Vietnamese man who told her that many Vietnamese people viewed the Vietnam/American War not simply as a war against America, but as part of a larger struggle against colonialism illustrates one perspective that was previously unknown to her, and one that put her more at ease. Likewise, Lori's observation of people with disabilities performing jobs they would not be allowed to do in the United States gave her another cultural perspective on issues related to ableism and inclusion, one that subsequently made her critically reflect on her own culture.

**Finding 5: Many of the study tour’s impact areas were in line with the goals of multicultural education and facilitated the development of sociocultural consciousness.**

The study tour’s impact on the development of sociocultural consciousness was particularly profound for teachers who never perceived being an “outsider” through travel or other life experiences. For those teachers, the study tour provided the context for three interrelated processes to occur that together contributed to the development of sociocultural consciousness. These included: formative intercultural events and incidents, which illuminated new cultural perspectives on a variety of social, political and economic issues; the perception of being an “outsider”, which raised teachers’ awareness/consciousness of issues related to their own identity and culture; and the process of critical reflection, which allowed participants to make meaning of their experiences and create new knowledge. Evidence of sociocultural consciousness development was most profound for those teachers who described how certain study tour experiences illuminated other cultural perspectives, which then led them to critically reflect on matters related to their own cultural identities, assumptions and worldview. One example is Kelly’s observation of the civility between motorists involved in a fender bender in Vietnam, which led her to critically reflect on American culture and wonder how the same scenario would have played out at home. It also caused her to change how she interacts with parents from Asian countries from a “tell it like it is approach” to one that was more culturally sensitive. Another example is Lori’s transformative learning experience observing people with disabilities working regular jobs in Cambodia and China. This led to the development of a new frame of reference on the topic of ableism

based on other cultural norms, which in turn made her question her cultural assumptions regarding issues of inclusion and disability. The critical reflection process eventually caused Lori to shift her worldview to one that was more aware of other cultural perspectives and norms regarding the treatment of people with disabilities. The development of sociocultural consciousness is an important goal of multicultural education and certain study tour experiences helped facilitate it for some teachers.

**Finding 6: Many of the formative intercultural experiences described by study tour participants were unplanned and fortuitous.**

While most of the activities and field trips were planned well in advance it was the unplanned fortuitous incidents and events that most participants described as having been particularly significant to expanding their understanding of the host country's culture. One example is Kelly and Jen's fortuitous friendship with the young Thai woman in Bangkok. Their conversations provided an opportunity for each of them to share stories about their lives and learn about each other's. In doing so Kelly and Jen learned about Thai culture, including those related to gender roles, family, filial piety, dating, and the privileges afforded to sons but not daughters both in Thailand as well as many other Asian countries. Even eight years after they first met, Kelly reported that she still exchanges e-mail with her Thai friend.

Another example of how an unplanned event became a formative and affective learning experience for study tour teachers was the constant presence of government minders accompanying the group during field trips in Vietnam. Many teachers discussed feeling violated, intruded upon, and extremely uncomfortable their presence. Two

teachers, Jen and Lynn, already deeply mistrustful of the Communist government left with a negative impression of the country, one that would stick with Lynn until she returned in 2007, and an impression that Jen still holds.

A final example is Jacqui's memory of all the amputees she saw in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. As an unplanned event, tragic as it was, it clearly made a deep impact on Jacqui who would recall how normal it became for her to see people on the streets with missing limbs. It was a formative experience because it made her realize what some of her students from war torn countries had gone through before making their way to Western Massachusetts and settling down. The study tour allowed her to develop an affective understanding of what "normal" is in countries that have seen so much war and devastation. It deepened her empathy for these students, and prompted her to advocate for them when she was an English as Second Language teacher.

**Finding 7: Many of the formative intercultural experiences weren't fully processed by study tour teachers until well after their return home.**

More often, these formative experiences did not get fully processed by the affected teacher until well after the conclusion of the study tour. Lori, for example, compared the moment a formative experience takes place to what it feels like when bodysurfing.

When you're in the zone it's exhilarating. It's different, it's wonderful; and it's only later when you can sit and sort of sift through and really start to evaluate things.

Similarly, Jen described being so focused on preserving each experience in her mind that it was impossible to process her experiences until she returned home and had the time and space to reflect.

When you're there you're [so] busy... boom, boom, boom. Take pictures, take pictures, get this, get that... because I'm only going to be here once. And then when you come back [home] and you're just kind of looking through everything again, you go "oh my god, oh yeah, it was really like that. This is not just a little postcard this is their everyday life of survival."

These observations confirm Merryfield's (2000) research, which found that the real meaning derived from overseas study tour experiences is often construed in retrospect over time.

**Finding 8: Students of Cambodian and Vietnamese descent were better able to make connections with teachers who they knew had visited Southeast Asia.**

In addition to developing greater degrees of cultural understanding, sensitivity and empathy towards students from diverse cultural backgrounds, several teachers also reported noticing a more positive reaction from students and parents whose home country they had visited during the study tour. Lynn, for example, reported several of her Vietnamese American students would bring her spring rolls during the New Year celebration. She also reported that some Vietnamese parents who used to be very shy seemed less so after learning she had traveled to Vietnam. Zora spoke of how she made a connection with one of her Vietnamese American students after showing her a placemat she brought back from a restaurant in Vietnam. After reading aloud the words on it, Zora reported: "obviously she got a kick out of my bad pronunciation, but she was thrilled and latched on to me from that day on." Alice, who had taught successive generations of

Cambodian and Cambodian American students, also reported that the pictures she brought back from Angkor Wat created an immediate connection between her and her Cambodian American students. For those students, knowing that someone who wasn't Cambodian actually went to Cambodia was not only comforting to them, but also an affirmation of their culture and identity.

**Finding 9: Many of the study tour teachers perceived the study tour as having a significant and profound impact on their personal and professional development, even some seven years afterwards.**

One of the requirements set forth in the grant proposal was for teacher to develop culturally relevant curriculum units based on research conducted during the study tour. Findings suggest that while this was a useful activity because it provided a professional focus that teachers could collaborate and share ideas on during and after the study tour, strict curriculum frameworks limited teachers' ability to teach the units they developed. Instead, they were more likely to pull pieces from their curriculum units, including resource materials collected in the host countries. Despite limited use of the curriculum units, teachers were able to utilize them in other ways, most commonly as a formal way to share their work with other educators during professional development workshops and conferences. The vast majority of study tour teachers reported presenting to colleagues at their schools immediately following their return home. In addition, Lori, Alice, Lynn and Sara presented at several regional conferences the fall semester following the study tour; Jen presented a slide show at her church, and then again with Kelly at the Lions Club not long afterwards. Lynn, who retired a few years after the study tour, was deeply affected

by the study tour experience and became involved with an Asian Studies department at a local college. In addition to conducting an annual seminar for the department, she continues to present several times a year at both regional and national conferences, as well as help organize other study tours through her affiliation to several professional development organizations.

This finding that many study tour teachers still find the experience as having a profound impact on their personal and professional life is significant because it suggests that many of the outcomes of the affective learning that took place during the study tour remains present despite the passage of time. Furthermore, many of the teachers interviewed still describe the study tour as a life-changing experience. This highlights the transformative nature of the study tour experience and suggests that personal and professional development are interconnected in many ways.

Lori, for example, cites the study tour has having made her more introspective, more aware of her ethnocentricity, and more cognizant of her privilege. Lynn, as mentioned in the previous section, has found a new passion in her retirement that came as a result of the study tour experience; one that she says keeps her busier than she was when she was a full-time teacher. Jen says that she still thinks about the study tour often. She finds that her experiences in Southeast Asia frequently comes up in conversations, most recently about the countless motorbikes carrying everything from TV sets to truck tires. It was life-changing for her because she had no idea what that part of the world was like until she got to see it for herself. She doesn't think she thinks any differently, she says, but the study tour experience "opened up the world" for her such that she now "processes information differently."

For Jacqui, the study tour experience was profound in many respects, but particularly so because she felt she finally had an understanding of what the war was like for her ex-husband and what the genocide was like for those who survived. The stories she had heard, while tragic, didn't have the same impact on her compared to actually visiting the sites where so much of the conflict took place. For her, the study tour allowed her to feel the history using other periphery senses. These sensory perceptions, the musty smell of the skulls at the Killing Fields memorial, and the humidity at the Cu Chi Tunnels all contributed to a deeper affective understanding of the history and the trauma it caused that to this day still remains very much in her mind.

These findings also suggest that the line between what is personal and what is professional development is blurred when the outcomes are such that they benefit both the person and the teacher. To be culturally sensitive and empathic, to be able to critically reflect on issues from multiple perspectives, to understand that there are people with other worldviews are all desirable qualities that make people better teachers.

### **Implications**

This section discusses the implications of this research study's findings and provides recommendations for others interested in developing international study tours for the purpose of teacher education and professional development.

#### **International Study Tours and Professional Development**

Implications from this research study suggest that international study tours conducted for the purpose of the professional development of teachers address specific



areas of need in both the school and the community at large. Those programs focused on developing multicultural competencies should consider visiting those countries from which a significant number of their students have a cultural connection to, because teachers are more likely to develop higher degrees of cultural sensitivity and understanding towards these groups, and develop skills and strategies to more effectively meet their educational needs. Research findings from this study also indicate the significance of the “outsider” experience on the development sociocultural consciousness, as well as cultural sensitivity and empathy. The “outsider” experience provides an avenue by which teachers become aware of other realities or “normals,” which in turn causes them to become more aware of their own cultural attitudes, behaviors and biases. Experiencing other realities also broadens teachers’ worldview, illuminating different cultural perspectives on local and global issues. Recreating the “outsider” experience for study tour participants ideally takes place in countries that are significantly different than where the teachers come from. Non-English speaking countries are preferable because they serve to enhance the “outsider” experience and recreate the challenges immigrant students and their families often face as they adjust to life in the United States. While the “outsider” perception can occur when study tour participants live and travel in a group, the experience tends to be less intense because the conditions are such that the group becomes a colony of the “insider” culture. Thus, it is far more preferable for individuals to leave the familiar and go out on their own when possible. Being alone changes the dynamics of the experience and increases the possibility that genuine intercultural learning will take place.

Planners should consider in-country activities that include experiential and affective learning opportunities that allow study tour participants to engage with members of the host culture in meaningful and interactive ways. This could include service or volunteer activities that draw on the expertise of participants while also making a positive contribution to the host community. These types of activities should always be planned in a participatory manner with guidance from representatives of the host community. As these types of arrangements may be beyond the scope of some study tours, an alternative is to provide adequate unstructured time for study tour participants to explore the country on their own or in small groups where safety may be a concern. Planners should also dedicate significant time for individual and group reflection. Individual reflection can take many forms, including the use of journals, podcasts, blogs, and photo and video essays. Group reflection should be scheduled at regular intervals and encourage participants to share their experiences and the meaning(s) they have drawn from them. Another implication comes from the finding that many of the meanings made from the study tour experience became clearer and more lucid with the passage of time. Because of this, informal gatherings should be arranged intermittently as a way for teachers to continue the reflection process and share new knowledge and meanings that have come to fruition since the last meeting.

International study tours are an effective professional development tool although they tend to be both time consuming and relatively costly. In terms of cost effectiveness, younger teachers, particularly those who have not had significant cross-cultural or “outsider” experiences, stand to benefit the most due to the fact that their careers are just beginning and the knowledge they gain are more likely to become integrated into their

teaching early on. Older, more experienced teachers, however, also stand to benefit from study tour experiences in the same way younger teachers do, but the cost effectiveness decreases the closer they are to retirement. They can, however, bring balance and perspective to the group, especially during group reflection exercises and debriefings. They also have the potential to serve as mentors for younger, more inexperienced teachers. With this in mind, it is important for planners to pay particular attention to the recruitment and selection of viable teacher candidates in order to ensure maximum cost effectiveness.

A final implication is that school administrators and other community leaders should consider the use of international study tours as a worthwhile and highly beneficial tool for the professional development of teachers, especially those teaching in culturally diverse communities. Grant funding agencies, such as the Fulbright Hayes Group Projects Abroad Office, offer annual grants for educators and other professionals interested in developing overseas study tours that focus on teacher education and promote good will and understanding between nations.

### **International Study Tours and Teacher Education Programs**

International study tours provide unique opportunities to facilitate the personal and professional development pre-service teachers so they are more multicultural, culturally responsive, and likely to affirm students' cultural identities in their classroom. By exercising this increased understanding and sensitivity towards minority students, teachers also model behaviors that encourage mainstream students to be more tolerant, accepting and even appreciative of cultural diversity.

Due to the intensive nature of teacher education programs, it is difficult for pre-service teachers to take advantage of study abroad opportunities despite the positive impact it will likely have on both their personal and professional development. Because of this, teacher education programs should consider the benefits of international study tours or other overseas internships and create opportunities for pre-service teachers to engage in activities that raise cultural awareness, sensitivity and empathy towards people from diverse cultural backgrounds. Pre-service teachers are also more likely to have the time to participate in international study tours because they are generally at a stage in life where they have fewer commitments due to work or family. Teacher education programs should also make greater effort to recruit teacher candidates whose ethnic and cultural background is more closely matches the demographics of the schools they will be teaching in because such teachers serve as role models and are more likely to be both culturally sensitive and understanding in ways that affirm their students' identity.

There is still some debate as to what constitutes a suitable amount of time to designate for international study tours in order to have a real impact on participants. Generally speaking, most researchers would agree that the more time spent in a foreign country the greater the potential intercultural learning will take place. However, suffice to say, most teachers do not have the luxury to spend long periods away due to family and work obligations. This makes it all the more important to provide viable opportunities for pre-service teachers who may have more time to commit to such programs if conditions allow, or ensure that study tour opportunities are well planned so that the quality of the experience is such that it satisfies the goals of the program. For those interested in developing study tours for the multicultural teacher education, the quality of the

experience is probably more important than the time spent in-country, although anything less than two weeks is probably too short. In general, the shorter the program the more intensive and immersive it should be in order to make a significant impact. Traveling to countries that aren't significantly different than the United States won't have the same effect on intercultural learning as it would to a country whose dominant culture and language are. Finding service opportunities that expose teachers to host communities are difficult to organize but have the potential of being very valuable in terms of creating goodwill and developing sustainable partnerships that stand to benefit all involved.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

It is my hope that the research presented here provides educators, administrators and other people interested in developing international study tours for teachers a better understanding of how one study tour affected the personal and professional development of a group of dedicated public school teachers in 2001. While I believe I have portrayed the teachers of this study tour both fairly and accurately, there were many areas that I was not able to cover, which I believe would have provided. I believe further research in these areas would contribute to a richer and more comprehensive understanding of the impact of study tours on teachers. Specifically, my recommendations for future research are as follows:

- Longitudinal research on the impact of international study tours on pre-service teachers. It is still unclear whether international study tours have the same effect on pre-service teachers compared to those who have already begun their teaching

- careers. Such studies should also be longitudinal because many of the meanings made from study tour experiences were shown to have taken place over time.
- Qualitative research on the impact of international study tours on teachers' attitudes regarding issues related to cultural diversity and multiculturalism. Such studies should collect more baseline data on teacher attitudes, pedagogy and curriculum used before the study tour experience in order to develop a better understanding of its overall effect.
  - Longitudinal research on significance of the "outsider" experience on teachers, particularly as they relate to the quality of international study tour. Such research would provide teacher educators with greater insight on how to design programs that maximize the impact of international study tours on the professional development of teachers.
  - Large-scale comparative research on both the short and long-term impact of study tours on teachers based on student achievement. Developing a more comprehensive understanding of the effect on students of having teachers who have participated on an international study tour might provide a compelling case for those either advocating for or against funding for such professional development opportunities.

Thanks to grant funding agencies like the Fulbright-Hays Group Projects Abroad Division of the United States Department of Education, international study tours for educators have received greater prominence as a professional development tool in the last

couple of decades. These opportunities make it possible for teachers to expand their worldview and see other ways of life. As Alice explained:

If I were going to design teacher education programs, I would design them with study abroad requirements. Because I think that when you can step out of your situation, you see your situation better... you also gain something from seeing another situation... you begin to develop a broader understanding of what's going on.

## APPENDIX A

### STUDY TOUR PARTICIPANTS

**Table 1: Study Tour Participants**

<b>NAME (PSEUDONYM)</b>	<b>GENDER</b>	<b>RACE</b>	<b>SUBJECT AREA</b>	<b>GRADE</b>	<b>YEARS TEACHING AT TIME OF STUDY TOUR</b>
Kelly	Female	White	2 <sup>nd</sup> Grade Classroom Teacher	2 (Elementary school)	5
Lori	Female	White	U.S. History, World History, Psychology	9-12 (High school)	15+
Lynn	Female	White	Social Studies	6-8 (Middle School)	20+
Zora	Female	White	World History, Sociology	9-12 (High School)	15+
Alice	Female	White	Science	6-8 (Middle School)	20+
Jen	Female	White	Art	6-8 (Middle School)	20+
Stan	Male	White	History, Social Studies	9-12 (High School)	20+
Jacqui	Female	White	ESL/4 <sup>th</sup> Grade Classroom Teacher	Elementary School	6



## **APPENDIX B**

### **STUDY TOUR PAMPHLET**

# **2001 Study Tour to South East Asia July 9-August 8, 2001**

Sponsored by: Fulbright Hays Group Projects Abroad, Five Colleges Inc., The Center for International Education at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, Springfield Public Schools, Northampton Public Schools, and Amherst Public Schools

## **The Study Tour**

The purpose of the study tour is to provide teachers an opportunity to experience first hand the nuances of SE Asia, and to develop units of instruction that better serve classrooms with SE Asian students. Program participants will travel to Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam as part of a Western Massachusetts team to research and develop culturally sensitive curriculum units. Furthermore, team members will develop proficiencies necessary to serve as professional development leaders for other teachers interested in integrating aspects of SE Asia into their curriculum.

A team of eight teachers will be selected from the Springfield, Amherst and Northampton school districts (2-3 teachers per district), to research and work collaboratively on the development of interdisciplinary units of instruction. For thirty days, the team will travel to Thailand, Vietnam and Cambodia, visiting historical sites, listening to local lecturers, and participating in activities aimed at increasing cross-cultural understanding.

## **Expectations:**

Following selection of the final team, team-members will be required to participate in a series of orientation sessions to be held in late May and June. While in SE Asia, team members will be expected to participate in all scheduled activities, including field trips, lectures, and meetings with local

organizations. In addition, team meetings to debrief, share information and work collaboratively on curriculum development will require team-member attendance. Following the study tour, participants will be required to attend several follow-up sessions aimed at curriculum building and dissemination. *Participants should be forewarned that Southeast Asia is a developing region. Travel may be rough at times.* Amenities such as sit-down toilets, hot water, efficient transportation, etc., are ***not*** the norm, but, rather the exception. Selected team members should be in reasonably good health and able to demonstrate a high degree of cultural sensitivity, patience, flexibility, and the ability to stay positive despite the rigors of group travel.

### **Costs:**

The program will cover most major expenses, including international airfare, in-country transportation and accommodation. Team members will be housed in mid-range hotels (based on double occupancy) and given a small stipend for daily meals. *Participants will be responsible for all other expenses including, but not limited to: passports, visas, medical and travel insurance, immunizations, departure taxes, content material (artifacts), and any other personal expenses.*

### **How to Apply:**

**Please see specific guidelines from your school district,** and write an essay that responds to the following questions:

- ◇ What do you hope to get out of the SE Asia study tour?
- ◇ What types of lectures, field trips, discussions most interest you?
- ◇ How will you incorporate your experience in SE Asia into relevant curriculum for your students?
- ◇ How have past experiential learning activities/travel impacted your teaching?
- ◇ Please describe your past travel experiences.
- ◇ What are some the challenges you envision? How do propose dealing with them?
- ◇ What do you believe is the role of multicultural education in public schools?

**Professional Development Points:**

Sixteen Professional Development Points will be awarded to participants by the Five College Public School Partnership for all orientation workshops prior to departure. Additional professional development points for the study tour and subsequent curriculum development will be awarded by the individual school districts.

## **APPENDIX C**

### **STUDY TOUR ORIENTATION SCHEDULE**

#### **Southeast Asia Study Tour Orientation**

Four three-hour orientation sessions will be held prior to the departure date. The purpose of the orientations is to provide relevant information to participants, including: logistical information, itinerary, health and insurance requirements, the purpose of the trip, roles and responsibilities background and history of the regions to be visited.

#### **Orientation 1- May18**

1. Welcome.
2. Introductions- Group participant's travel and teaching experience.
3. Explanation of Group Study Abroad Project, goals, expectations, responsibilities.
4. Itinerary- Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam.
5. Logistics discussion. Passports and visas, per diems, what to bring, medical and insurance requirements.
6. Preliminary discussion about curriculum teams based on interests and objectives of participants.
7. Questions and answers.

#### **Orientation 2- June 7**

1. Welcome and introduction
2. Orientation schedule.
3. Group norm discussion.
4. Room assignments.
5. Regional background of SE Asia.
6. Historical themes and overview.
7. Q & A.

#### **Orientation 3- June 14**

1. Discussion about SE Asian groups in America- diaspora and transnationalism.
2. Country profiles.
3. Team time to discuss objectives, individual and group responsibilities, initial and final product.
4. Discussion of "Study Circles" in the fall.

#### Orientation 4- June 28

Goals: To refine and refine individual and group objectives. To wrap-up questions, concerns, details, etc. before departure date.

1. Team refinement of objectives.
2. Curriculum Development discussion facilitated by George Urch.
3. Protocol discussion.
4. Final instructions
5. Q & A.



13 JUL 01 - FRIDAY 6:00 AM 6:15 AM 8:00 am Depart BK Air #930 8:50 arrive Siem Reap 9:00 AM 10:00-12:00 am 12:00-1:00 1:00-5:00 Evening	Check out hotel Depart for airport Depart Bangkok Air #930 Arrive Siem Reap, Cambodia Hotel Check in Meet Dith & Orientation to Angkor Lunch Angkor w/Guide Open	City Angkor Hotel Res # Tel:(855) 15 637301 Fax:(855) 63 380022
14 Jul 01- Saturday 9:00 AM-4:00 PM Evening	Angkor w/guide all day Open	
15 JUL 01 - SUNDAY 6:00 AM 6:15 AM 7:15 AM  9:00 AM 10-1:00pm Afternoon Evening	Check-out/settle hotel bills Depart for airport Flight to Phnom Penh  check-in Museum & City Tour (option) Group Reflection/Sharing Classical dance/dinner (optional)	Cambodia Sofitel Hotel Tel:426288 Fax:426392
16 Jul 01- Monday 7:00-8:00 am 8:30 am-11:30am  12:00-1:00 Afternoon  Evening	breakfast Brief on Current Issues: - Education, environment, health - Overseas Khmer-American dialogue - Luncheon w/Khmer Americans - Visit markets & Wat Phrom, temples in Phnom Penh, Genocide Museum Classical dance/dinner (Optional)	
17 Jul 01- Tuesday 7:00-8:00 am 8:30 AM 12:00 PM afternoon evening	breakfast Depart Kampong Speu village visit Picnic lunch at Wat Prachanransit Return to Phnom Penh & Open Nightlife w/Dith (Optional)	
18 Jul 01- Wednesday 7:00am 8:30-12:00	Breakfast Roundtable: Cambodia Today with	

12:00-1:30 Afternoon	NGO and Student Group Leaders Host Luncheon for speakers Open-individual/group work	
19 Jul 01- Thursday 7:00 AM 8:30-12:00 12:00-1:30 2:00 afternoon	Breakfast School visit/ talk with teachers Lunch Visit WWF Office/staff (Optional) Open-individual/group work	
20 July 01- Friday Optional day Morning  Afternoon/evening	Mekong Island & Silk Making(Optional) Sala Ratchana Arts/Handicraft shop book store etc. (optional) Group Reflection/Sharing	
21 July 01-Saturday 9:00-11:00 11:30 Vietnam Air 812 LV: 110pm AR: 2:05 pm Evening	Check-out/settle hotel bills DEPART AIRPORT  hotel checkin/guided walk tour of District #1 with student guide(option) Dinner w/students (optional)	Majestic Hotel Tel: 08-829-5517 FAX: 08-829-5510
22 July 01-Sunday 9:00am-12:00  12:00pm-2:30 3:00pm-5:00 evening	Visit Independence Palace/Nha Rong Museum Lunch in Cultural Park Giac Vien Tu or Giac Lam Pagoda Cultural Performance (Optional)	
23 July 01-Monday 9:00 AM  12:00pm afternoon  evening	HCM Univ. of Education: Orientation with discussion Lunch hosted by HCM University Informal discussion with English teacher Home visits (tentative) Open	
24 July 01-Tuesday 9:00 am-12:00  afternoon	Group 1- Meetings with Secondary & Vocational Center Group 2- Elementary & Middle School visit & discussion, Govap District Visit CuChi tunnel(optional)/Open	



evening	Open-individual/group work	
25 July 01-Wednesday 9:00-12:00  12:00-1:30pm afternoon evening	Visit export manufacturing plants  Meet with Viet Khieu Committee Group Meeting Informal meeting with Viet-American students (optional)	
26 July 01- Thursday 8:00 AM 9:00 AM  11:00 AM 4:00 PM	Check out Majestic Hotel leave by van for Vung Tau Cat Tien National Park, Dong Nai province Check in Govt. Guest House(?)	
27 July 01-Friday morning 12:00 PM afternoon evening	Visit Vung Tau Industrial zone lunch Beach assessment Group Meeting	
28 Jul 01-Saturday 7:00 AM 9:30 AM 10:00 AM 1:40pm Thai International #681 & 116 Lv: 1:40 pm Lv: 5:15 pm AR: 6:15 pm	beach walk/breakfast (optional) check-out of Guest House leave for HCMC & airport Depart for Bangkok  transfer Bangkok to #116	
28 Jul 01-Saturday 6:45 PM 7:00 PM	check-in Dinner/Group Briefing	Chiang Mai Sports Club
29 Jul 01-Sunday 7:00-9:00am 9:00-12:00 Afternoon Evening	breakfast Orientation Temple Tour (Optional) Khan Toke Reception Dinner	
30 Jul 01-Monday 7-9:00 am 9:00-11:30am 11:30-1:00pm	breakfast/stroll Political & Economic Issues lunch	

2:00-3:00 pm evening	Group Reflection/Sharing Open	
31 Jul 01-Tuesday 7:00-9:00 am 9:00 AM afternoon evening	walk/breakfast Thai Educational Reforms visit CMU campus, Thai school, International School class visit Open	
01 Aug 01-Wednesday 9:00-1:00 day trip Afternoon Evening	Lampang Open Dinner with Hosts:Panit, Manob & Pang	
02 Aug 01- Thursday On Your Own Day evening	Make your own agenda - Thai massage temples, shop for handicrafts/resource materials, visit Doi Suthep Group Meeting	
03 Aug 01-Friday day trip Afternoon	Weaving home industry/Sahaphat Industrial Estate (garment exports) Open	
04-05 Aug 01-Saturday/Sunday Beyond Chiangmai	Overnight trips to Chiangrai or Mae Hong Son (optional) Open	
06 Aug 01-Monday 9:00am 10-11:00am 12:00 PM 1:15 pm depart on TG 107 to Bangkok 2:25 pm arrive Bangkok 4:00PM	1 hour debrief meeting check out hotel leave for airport  bus to hotel Open	
07 Aug 01- Tuesday 9:00-11:00 am evening	Group Meeting & Debrief Dinner	
08 AUG 01 -WEDNESDAY 5:30 AM 6:00 AM 7:25 am Lv United 876 coach class 8:03 pm Ar Hartford	checkout Leave for airport  home at last..lots of great memories [ and class units in progress!!!]	

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